A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experience of Homeless Men

Thesis

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Abstract

Homelessness is a complex issue, one that is noticeably visible within the public spaces of our cities, something that many look away from and move quickly past. This study endeavours to provides insight into a phenomenon that demands better understanding, and in so doing offers the possibility of not averting our gaze and instead seeing homelessness for what it really is.

Through an approach informed by Max van Manen's (1990, 2007, 2014) hermeneutic phenomenology, the lived experience of nine homeless men was examined and revealed a lived experience that is multifarious, where paradox, hope and despair are mixed in equal measures. This study illustrates the hardship and loneliness of homeless lives, which are frequently blighted by boredom and shame and involve limited personal agency. The study also reveals the fierce desire for intimacy and friendship with others who are not homeless, a desire frequently beyond their reach. It shows that the intersubjective world of homeless men is complicated, nuanced and impacted heavily through being homeless. Finally, this study challenges the view that homeless people are unwilling to work, showing instead that they undertake many types of work that require determination and effort, leading on occasion to self-improvement and the writing of new more positive narratives about their lives.

This is a study that seeks to provide a picture of homelessness that is beyond the typical social policy concern with accommodation or common generalisations. It reveals lives of complexity and nuance, where there is often grinding hardship and unhappiness, punctuated on rare occasions by moments of happiness and transformation. It is a study that reveals the experience of homelessness and shows a lifeworld in need of proper and thoughtful understanding.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Oh, I feel so break up, I wanna go home

Sandburg, 1927

1.1 Introduction

Homelessness is a topical and sometimes charged issue, one that draws a range of views and opinions, not just about homelessness but also society's response to it. It is also a subject researched and examined from a wide range of disciplines and positions, which seek answers for its causes and consequences and to understand its overall nature. It is something that many of us feel some familiarity with through our encounters with rough sleepers, beggars and people selling 'street newspapers' in our cities and towns. However, we only see the very tip of an iceberg, where the majority of those who are homeless are invisible to us and their real lives unknown. This study was born out of a desire to bring new light and understanding to the phenomenon of homelessness. The aim was to look beyond the stereotypes, half-truths and preconceptions of a population that many of us have encountered frequently but few of us know much about. Therefore, the intention was to examine the lived experience of homeless men, to reveal what their everyday lives are like and also to challenge some of the negative narratives surrounding this population. It is a study aimed at being faithful to the realities of their lives and providing some opportunity to counter some of the injustices they might face. It was a study exploring lives very different from how most of us experience our world.

In this chapter I will introduce this study, present some of the key issues concerning research into homelessness, and present the questions this study seeks to explore and the methods being applied to answer them.

1.2 Defining Homelessness

Homelessness is a contentious issue, frequently hitting the headlines and generating debate across society. Its present incarnation in the UK has its roots back in the sixteenth century, where the rapid and widespread growth in vagrant numbers (Pound, 1971), and its continuation from then on, led to 500 years of state efforts to reduce, prevent and tackle it. However, with the end of the Second World War and the election of a new Labour government (1945), a new approach to dealing with homelessness began, starting with the 1948 National Assistance Act. This legislation promised a better world for the poor, destitute and homeless: it was an act that wiped away hundreds of years of poor laws. Since the Elizabethan Poor Laws, vagrants (the precursor to the modern homeless person) had been seen as a problem and underserving of poor relief. The 1948 act reversed this and "entitled (homeless people) to welfare payments… [and provided] a basic subsistence in his pocket" (Rose, 1988, p.175). Casual wards (a specific area of the workhouse for vagrants) were turned into Reception Centres, and investment took place to provide programmes of support to help vagrants and others who were destitute, to find work and regain a life free of poverty and hardship: "It looked as though the good intentions (of this Act) would be achieved, and vagrancy would wither away" (Rose, 1988, p.176).

As well intentioned as this Act was, it ended up proving to be inadequate and homelessness during this period continued to increase, causing enough concern for the State to commission the first major post-war study on homelessness (in the UK) in 1961 (Pleace and Quilgars, 2003). This was a watershed moment in the field of homelessness research, one that coincided with a wider "rediscovery of poverty by social scientists" (Pleace and Quilgars, 2003, p. 188), and led to homelessness becoming recognised as a major social problem (Pleace and Quilgars, 2003, p. 188). The coming together of these events created an unprecedented interest in homelessness and research into it, one that continues to this day.

With increasing interest in the study of homelessness, the need for an accurate definition became necessary, something that has turned out to be both difficult and controversial. There are several reasons for this, including the vested interests that litter the field of homeless provision (Jencks, 1995), each with a stake in defining homelessness to suit either their agenda or outlook towards it. Furthermore, homelessness is also an "ideological construct" (Somerville, 1992, p.530), influenced by

varying opinions regarding the nature of society and the human condition (Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016). Despite these difficulties it was important for this study to find a definition, or at least some clear sense of what is meant by homelessness, one that would reflect the nuances of the subject and provide a clear understanding of the position this study will take.

Although there are numerous definitions of homelessness, most focus on the absence of permanent or fixed accommodation (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992, Rossi et al. 1987 It is a type of definition favoured by the UK Government, which sees homelessness in terms of a person "being without a roof over their heads" (Gov.UK, 2013), but also those who are "threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation" (Gov.UK, 2013). The statutory definition of homelessness in the Housing Act 1996 (amended in 2017/8 which put more responsibility on to local authorities to tackle homelessness) is as follows:

> Homelessness and threatened homelessness.
>
> (1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he —
>
> (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court,
>
> (b) has an express or implied licence to occupy,
>
> (c) or occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.
>
> 2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but —
>
> (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
>
> (b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.
>
> (3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.

(4) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 56 days.

(5) A person is also threatened with homelessness if —

(a) A valid notice has been given to the person under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 (orders for possession on expiry or termination of assured shorthold tenancy) in respect of the only accommodation the person has that is available for the person's occupation, and

(b) that notice will expire within 56 days. (Gov.UK, 1996)

This statutory definition provides the Government and Local Authorities with a framework for administration and policy support with respect to homelessness. It also provides a standard way to measure homelessness in the UK, a key ingredient for effective policy decisions and the overall thinking surrounding homeless provision. For example, using this definition the UK Government estimated that there are 70,430 homeless people in the UK (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (a), 2019), with 4,677 of these sleeping rough (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (b) (Rough Sleeping Statistics), 2019).

As important as the statutory definition is, most charities and independent bodies in the UK that are involved in homelessness prefer to use definitions that are simpler and more accessible. It is an approach to defining homelessness that suits this study and will provide a useful backbone for exploring the phenomenon. With this in mind I chose a definition from Homeless Link, one of the leading charities working in the homeless sphere. They define being homeless as someone "without a roof over their head [and] people whose accommodation is insecure; those facing eviction, living in temporary accommodation, squatting, people at risk of violence, those housed in property potentially damaging to their health, and those who cannot afford their current accommodation" (Homeless Link, 2016, p.10). It is a definition that aligns well with the statutory definition, those from the main homeless charities in the UK and also many of the leading international bodies who work in this area, including the UN and the EU (ETHOS, 2018, Herlinger, 2020). It is a definition that puts a lack of accommodation at the centre of the issue and includes those individuals who have a roof over their head but whose living circumstances are precarious, insecure or inappropriate for their needs.

1.3 Selecting the Population

Another challenge with studying homelessness is the wide and diverse range of people that experience it. Understanding this diversity and deciding upon which group of people to focus on was a critical aspect of this study, one that not only affected the methodology employed but also had implications for the findings.

Although homeless people are often considered a homogenous group, the reality is that there are several distinct demographic groups, each experiencing homelessness differently (Baker, 1994). With by far the largest area of research into homelessness focusing on men (see for example Baptista, 2010, Crystal, 1984, a group that also appears to make up the biggest proportion of homeless people. For example, the Office for National Statistics (2019) report that "in general, more male homeless applicants than female homeless applicants are reported across all countries (of the UK)" (p.36) and that single homeless men make up 61% of the overall population (Ibid, p.25). With respect to rough sleepers, men make up a significant majority with only 14% being women (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (b), 2019, p.4). With some qualifications, such as homeless families and especially single parents, single men are believed to make up the largest proportion of the homeless population in the UK.

In designing this study, I made the choice early on to focus on homeless hostels and drop-in centres, places that are a crucial element of the lives of many homeless people (Homeless Link, 2016, Johnsen et al., 2005, Crane and Warnes, 2007), providing not just accommodation, but food, drink, and a range of professional and voluntary support services. At their best, "hostels are places that inspire hope and happiness, as well as a sense of security and independence… They give people a new chance in life, and create opportunities to build new relationships, reconnect with family, learn new skills, and help people to reach success and prosper." (St Mungo's, 2017, p.3) There are estimated to be 1,185 accommodation projects, which include hostels and single person accommodation units (Homeless Link, 2016). They are places used by homeless people and so this would in effect be a self-defining population in terms of being homeless. These places also guaranteed that there would be a population to recruit from and had

potential spaces in which to conduct the interviews, with facilities that may provide some level of privacy and security for both myself and the participant.

Focusing this study on populations that use or frequent homeless hostels and drop-in centres meant that there would be a disproportionally high percentage of single homeless men compared to other demographic groups (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999). I knew this early on in the design of this study and therefore decided strategically to focus solely on homeless men. This decision was not made lightly, as it is a demographic that has already attracted the majority of research into homelessness (Baptista, 2010, Crystal, 1984), such that the opportunity to bring new insight to the study of homelessness could be limited compared to other populations. However, there were two reasons for selecting just homeless men to include in this study, as discussed below.

The main reason for selecting men was born of the desire to examine in detail both the intersubjective experience and relationship with work that homeless people had. Across both these topics I felt that gender, and specifically masculinity, something that has had little attention paid to it in the literature on homelessness (Ming Liu et al., 2009, p.131), may have a significant impact.

The study of masculinity is an "interdisciplinary field… concerned with the social construction of what it means to be a man" (Kimmell and Bridges, 2014). It is not something that is singular nor simply tied to being a man in some predetermined sense, which maps" biological sex directly onto gender identity" (Gough, 2018, Chapter 1). Instead, masculinity is better understood as a "plurality of masculinities" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832), something that is "constrained and enabled within particular contexts, intersected by other relevant identities such as social class, race, and sexual orientation" (Gough, 2018, location 104). Hegemonic masculinity is certainly not the only way gender can be expressed or felt by men, but it is still a dominant form of masculinity. It was first described by Connell in 1987 and is particularly pernicious for the way that it serves to structure male experience in a limited and sometimes quite problematic manner. As the traditional form of masculinity in most societies, it results in an arguably impoverished way of being for men, particularly with respect to their sense of self-worth and capacity to relate to others. It embodies "the… most honored way of being a man" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832) in contemporary western culture, defined by such traits as being "rich,

white, heterosexual, tall, athletic, professionally successful, confident, courageous, and stoic" (Berdahl et al., 2018, p.426).

There is evidence that homelessness presents a unique challenge to men through loss of their ability to fulfil their sense of what it means to be a man (Lorentze, 2017, Nonn, 1995). This 'being a man' is likely structured through a form of hegemonic masculinity, where a sense of worth stems from living up to an ideal of being a successful provider for himself and his family, successful in work and able to put a roof over the heads of himself and his family. Becoming homeless and the resultant loss of hegemonic masculinity has potential consequences to not just the sense of self for the person, but also their intersubjective experience and relationship with work, two key elements of the study and the main reasons to focus on men.

Another key aim of this research study was to conduct multiple and in-depth interviews over an extended time frame with each participant (see section 3.2.2), in large part to ameliorate the impact of those 'hit and run' methods commonly used with difficult to reach populations. To reduce the risk of participants dropping out mid-way or being unwilling to share their stories in detail, there was a need to build trust and establish a sense of mutuality with the participants. Cloke et al. (2010) talk about the importance of establishing trust when researching into the lives of homeless people in the following:

> Establishing relationships of trust with [homeless] service users, who can otherwise be wary of talking with outsiders', in facilitating interviews with people with chaotic lifestyles, and in order to observe the dynamics shaping different service environments (ibid, p.15).

The difficulty of establishing this trust is further compounded due to the fact that "a large proportion of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness [are] vulnerable adults" (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018, p.20) and that "recruitment [of vulnerable homeless people] can be difficult because potential participants may be withdrawn, socially alienated, distrustful of research projects, or absorbed with the demands of their current challenges" (Strehlau et al., 2017, p.48). There is evidence that this vulnerability, and the overall issue of wariness in talking to outsiders, is not something spread equally across all the homeless demographics, as women seem disproportionally to be the victims of domestic and other abuse at the hands of men. For example, St Mungo's (2014) found

that nearly half of their female clients had "experienced domestic abuse, and 19% had experienced abuse as a child, compared with 5% to 8% of men" (ibid p.4). St Mungo's findings show that homeless women experience much more violence, abuse and are generally more vulnerable than homeless men, a finding replicated across much of the literature (Bretherton, 2017, Homeless Link, 2018, Watson, 1983,) Given this situation and the overall difficulty my study faced in recruiting participants and conducting potentially very personal interviews over an extended period, I felt again that it would be prudent to focus my study on homeless men rather than women. This was a group that I felt as a man I would be able to build trust with more readily.

In summary, homeless men were chosen as the focus of this study as masculine identities are potentially uniquely impacted by becoming homeless, which may be felt across their lived experience and particularly in the intersubjective world and in their relationship with work. Homeless men were also a population that maximised my opportunity for building trusting relationships, which would enable the multi interview approach that I felt was necessary to examine in detail the phenomenon of homelessness. This second reason was further facilitated by my choice to use homeless hostels and drop-in centres to recruit and undertake the interviews as they are places many more men than women frequent.

1.4 The Research Question

A clear research question helps shape and direct a study, providing focus and setting out the intended scope. In this regard this study began with the broad and general phenomenological question of "what is the lived experience of homeless people in the UK?" A question that reflects my interest in uncovering the lifeworld of others and also defines the topic of study as homelessness. With the decision to focus on homeless men, I was able to further refine the question by replacing 'homeless people' with 'homeless men'. This question was sufficient to begin this study, however as I read through the literature and began conducting this study in earnest, new sub-questions began to materialise that I felt would facilitate deeper and more insightful enquiry into the subject area. The first of these was based around the intersubjective experience of homeless men, specifically understanding and revealing what kind of relationships homeless men had with others and how this experience manifested. This topic is not without precedent

in the research on homelessness, with several authors taking on aspects of this topic including Barker et al. (2018), Cattell (2001), Holt et al. (2011), Neale and Brown (2016), Seiler and Moss (2010), Stevenson (2014) and Rayburn and Corzine (2010). In this study, I build upon this body of work and delve further into the relationships the participants had with other homeless people and others who were not homeless with whom they came into regular contact, with the potential of exploring the nature of these two kinds of experience. Therefore, a sub-question to this research is "what is the experience of relationships with others for homeless men?"

A second question that I felt was important, was how homeless men fill and occupy their time. This became a fundamental question for this study, one aimed at exploring how homeless men spent their time and one that I felt could potentially reveal a world beyond the stereotypical view of them wasting their time drinking, taking drugs and sleeping in public places. Within the research into homelessness, there are some specific studies that explore how homeless people occupy their time, for example Marshall et al. (2019), O'Neil (2017), Wasserman and Clair (2010). There is also literature that examines some of the activities that homeless people engage in beyond those typically considered. For example Coyne (2018) looks at how homeless people spend time in choirs, and Ayers (2006) looks at their use of libraries. However, there is little focus (Marshall et al., Coyne and Ayers notwithstanding) on the activities that bring new meaning and potentially growth to homeless men. I felt there was more to see here than had hitherto been revealed and wanted to explore in detail how homeless men filled their time, building on existing research (Marshall et al., 2019, Roy et al., 2017, Thomas et al., 2011) focusing on how constructive activities, including those that could be considered 'work-like', might bring meaning to their world. Therefore, a sub-question to this research is "what do homeless men do to fill their time?"

A third question concerned the experience of homeless men in the context of the spaces they inhabit (spatiality). Here the aim was to understand what kind of places homeless men spend their time in and how these places are experienced by them. This was not simply to bring light to the places they frequented, but also to reveal how these places impacted their lives and what feelings the men had towards them. A key aspect of this was to explore and understand the meaning of home for them and to see whether they felt they had one. Within the research into homelessness, the experience of place and home has been examined in several instances including Ayers (2006), Desjarlais (1997) Hopper et

al. (2010), and Holt et al. (2011). Some more detailed work has also focussed specifically on the experience of living on the street, including Ballintyne (1999), Donley and Wright (2012), and Healy (1988). For this study, the aim was to move deeper into how places that were important, or at least regularly frequented, impacted the lives of homeless men. Therefore, a further sub-question to this research is "what is the experience of place for homeless men?"

The final area of investigation was a focus on how homeless men experienced their bodies as they went about their daily lives. Corporeality or embodiment is an area of importance for phenomenology, notably within the work of the renowned phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), who is seen as the "phenomenologist of the body" (van Manen, 2014, p.304). The body, particularly its well-being, is considered frequently in the literature on homelessness, with a sizeable portion of this focussed on the health issues related to being homeless, for example, McQuistion et al. (2013), Raoult et al. (2001), Reeve et al. (2009) and Stolte and Hodgetts (2013). It also occurs in some of the journalistic and autobiographical accounts of homelessness, for example, Healy (1988) and Courtenay (2018). For this study, it felt important to delve deeper into how homeless men's lives are experienced in terms of their bodies. The key here was to ascertain if homelessness was always something that negatively impacted the homeless body, as shown in the literature, or whether there was anything more positive about the corporeal world of homeless men. Therefore, the final sub-question for this research is "what is the corporeal experience of being homeless for men?"

To summarise, the research question for this study is "what is the lived experience of homeless men in the UK?" incorporating the following four sub-questions:

1. What is the experience of relationships with others for homeless men?
2. What do homeless men do to fill their time?
3. What is the experience of space and place for homeless men?
4. What is the corporeal experience of being homeless for men?

1.5 The Theoretical Approach

To examine the lived experience of homeless men a qualitative methodology was employed. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to this kind of study, concerned as they are with the "naturalistic or interpretation of phenomena in terms of the meaning these have for people experiencing them" (Langdridge, 2007, p.2). They are methods that have "gained increasing recognition from the 1980s onwards not only in the social sciences in general, but also in psychology" (Demuth, 2015, p.125). Qualitative research consists of a set of approaches that seek to describe and understand beyond or outside numerical data, concentrating on how a phenomenon occurs rather than how often it happens. They use a number of different methods to gather data, including interviewing, direct observation, questionnaires, analysis of artefacts, cultural records and visual materials. The key to qualitative research is a focus on examining the context of the phenomena being studied, ensuring that the paradigms that surround it are understood and where necessary are challenged. For research into homelessness, where paradigms about the nature of the social world, and specifically homeless people, abound, the adoption of a qualitative approach provides an opportunity to not only reveal the lived world of the participants but to examine the paradigms that exist within and about it.

It is important to realise that qualitative methods are not one single approach to inquiry and cover "a vast and heterogeneous field… [that] has the potential to contribute to our knowledge production by looking at a phenomenon from various perspectives" (Demuth, 2015, p.126-7). Therefore, for this study a phenomenological methodology was used, one that was based upon the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of Max van Manen (1990, 2014). Merleau-Ponty defines phenomenology as an approach that "offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is" (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.vii). Van Manen defines it in terms of the study of "the pre-reflective or pre-predicative life of human existence as living through it" (van Manen, 2014, p.26). It is an approach that enables lived experience to be revealed and interpreted, one that is based upon many of the core principles and traditions of phenomenology. Van Manen's methodology also offers a particularly sensitive and reflective way to achieve this, one underpinned by a strong pragmatic concern, including thoughtful ways to conduct interviews, analyse text and then bring this all together through writing to illuminate profoundly the lived experience of

those studied. With this in mind it felt appropriate to adopt an approach informed by van Manen's (1997, 2014) hermeneutic phenomenological methodology for this study, a research method that is rigorous and practical whilst also grounded in phenomenological philosophy.

1.6 Summary

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that many of us come into contact with on a daily basis, but it remains hidden from our full scrutiny and understanding. It is a subject that is problematic and challenging, creating diverse and contradictory opinions on its nature and meaning for society.

This chapter set out the case for studying the phenomenon of homelessness and began with some examination of the challenges of defining it. A definition was selected from a leading homeless charity that is representative of the most popular definitions from the sector, aligns with the statutory definition and puts accommodation at its centre. From there the challenge of choosing a population to include in this study was tackled; here the case for focussing on men was put forward and how the choice of homeless hostels and drop-in centres to undertake this study supported this choice. Next, the research questions were discussed and how they would be answered through a methodological approach that was qualitative and grounded in phenomenology.

This study is designed to reveal the lived experience of homeless men and provide an account of their world in their own terms. It is a study driven by the phenomenological desire to see things as they are, discerned through an approach informed by the hermeneutic phenomenology of Max van Manen (1990, 2014). It is a study aimed at delivering insight and generating reflection about an issue that occasionally crosses our path as we walk through the streets surrounding our homes and places of work.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.0 Introduction to the Literature

There is a "vast body of literature on homelessness" (Meanwell, 2012, p.80), including academic research, an assortment of contemporary and historical biographies, numerous interpretations in fiction and many historical accounts. In this chapter I will review the literature that is most relevant to this study, starting with some of the broader work, looking at how the phenomenon of homelessness is framed and its relevance to this study. Then I will examine the literature that is explicitly related to this study, research that examines and discusses the lived world of homeless people, such as ethnographic and phenomenological studies. The objective of the chapter will be to critically examine the literature and to highlight those areas that this study will be able to build upon or provide a counter-position to.

2.1 The Breadth of Homelessness Literature

There are several reasons why the literature on homelessness is so extensive. Firstly, this is due to it being a constituent of the broader field of literature on poverty and social marginalisation. Snow and Anderson (1987) capture this point in the following piece:

> Congregated at the bottom of nearly every social order is an aggregation of demeaned and stigmatized individuals variously referred to historically as the ribauz (Holmes, 1952), the lumpenproletariat (Marx and Engels, 1967), untouchables (Srinivas and Beteille, 1984), the underclass (Myrdal, 1962), or superfluous people (Harrington, 1984). (Snow and Anderson, 1987, p.1336)

Homelessness and poverty are intimately connected, sharing not only a common history but also many of the same causes and consequences. Here, this literature frequently evidences a deep connection between the two, where homelessness is seen as a foreseeable consequence of poverty and poverty as

a regular consequence of homelessness (Anderson and Christian, 2003, Anderson et al., 1993, Drake et al., 1981). Poverty and homelessness are like a dance of two miserable bedfellows, each impacting upon and shaping the other.

A second reason for this breadth of literature is its long history in the UK, specifically in England, which has produced the majority of the literature over the centuries (for example Awdeley, 1561, Aydelotte, 1913, Beier, 1985, London, 1903, Luther and Hotten, 1528). For hundreds of years homeless people, vagrants and those on the margins of society have intrigued society and been captured by the pen of many, for example, Holmes (1952), writing about the 12th Century in England, describes how the "ribauz, or good-for-nothings, were always on the edge of a crowd. They begged and plundered at the slightest provocation" (Holmes, 1952, p.37). Continuing with this theme, Jusserand (1889) explains that in the Middle Ages "many people were bound to a wandering existence" (p.11). Snow and Anderson (1993) track homelessness back through the ages, explaining that "preindustrial cities contained large numbers of impoverished and organisationally unattached persons…" (Snow and Anderson, 1993, p.10). These works illustrate not just the diversity of literature on the history of homelessness but how it has been a recognisable and constant feature across the centuries, a phenomenon that was written about and explored by many.

A further reason for the breadth of literature is the peculiar and romantic image that hobos, vagrants and tramps have conjured up, a situation where they are frequently "romanticized as one of innocent circumstance and structural circumstance" (Wasserman and Claire, 2010, p.58). For example, hobos and tramps feature widely in movies, from early twentieth Century films such as Charlie Chaplin's 1915 movie *'The Tramp'*, to more recent movies such as Eddie Murphy in '*Trading Places*' (1983) and Robin Williams' portrayal of a homeless man in the 1991 movie *'The Fisher King'*. In literature these romantic images of homelessness have also featured widely, such as in Jack Kerouac's 1957 '*On the Road',* chronicling Kerouac's years traveling the North American continent, or John Steinbeck's 1939 '*The Grapes of Wrath*'. Music has also contributed to this nostalgia and romanticism, with examples such as Bob Dylan's 1963 '*Only a Hobo'* or Johnny Cash's 1991 '*The Hobo Song*'. A telling and clear example of how homelessness has been portrayed in recent times as a romantic experience comes from Maharidge's (1993) study of '*Blackie*', an old and seasoned veteran of the hobo life.

There are of course other reasons for the growth of homelessness literature, such as a growing interest in social policy, anthropological interest in modern tribes and groups, and the growth of agencies and organisations trying to resolve or eradicate homelessness. However, what is clear is that homelessness is a popular topic for both academics and writers, driven by a variety of reasons and agendas, and thereby creating a multifaceted collection of thought and opinion about the topic.

2.2 The Literature on Homelessness

With the literature on homelessness being so vast, it is of no surprise that there are numerous areas of possible focus and deliberation, each potentially bringing different insights and understanding. Time and space prevent a review of all of these, so instead I will concentrate on the areas that are most relevant to this study, including; the literature that frames homelessness, the quantification of homeless numbers, defining homelessness, the causes and consequences of homelessness, and finally the social construction of it. My intention will be to provide a clear picture of how homelessness is treated and understood in the literature, the context for this study, and the key issues explored in the literature and how they relate to this study.

2.2.1 The Framing of Homelessness in the Literature

There is a wide body of literature that explores homelessness in its totality, touching upon many of its constituent parts as it seeks to provide a clear overall picture of the nature of homelessness. These works typically examine the key issues surrounding homelessness, while also sharing real case studies of people who are homeless, bringing to life the theory they present and affording a glimpse into the reality of homelessness. They are important in the study of homelessness as they show how the subject is treated in its entirety, revealing it as something that can be examined in a methodological manner, one which they break down into key issues and thoughts around tackling it. They also frequently frame the subject in terms of a social problem, one that social science can unravel and offer answers to. Such is the case with Glasser and Bridgman's (1999) anthropological work, which is an account of how homelessness

has been explored, particularly in anthropological studies. Glasser and Bridgman spend much of their book looking at how homelessness is defined and counted, before moving on to descriptions of some of the major aspects of being homeless. It is a comprehensive account of how the phenomenon of homelessness is typically treated across much of the literature, with an emphasis in the latter chapters on experiences of homelessness, including living on streets and routes out of its clutches. However, it is their discussion of the framing of homelessness and particularly how they do this which is of significance for this study. They, like much of the work they criticise, adopt a distinctly epidemiological lens through which to view homelessness. Madden (2003) picks up on this and delivers a scathing criticism of Glasser and Bridgman, arguing that "they reproduce a temporally and culturally distanced version of 'the homeless' as highly modern yet primitivized objects of study that serves to flatter the anthropologist" (p.1). It is a framing of homelessness that typifies much of the general literature on homelessness, one where homeless people are seen as something apart and different from the rest of society, a tribe that anthropologists in the case of Glasser and Bridgman can examine in order to discover the reality of their experience.

McNaughton's (2008) is a more contemporary study of homelessness, one that delivers a robust theoretical examination of the main areas of homelessness and some detailed examples of the real experience of it. This includes some deep examination of the problems that homeless people face and how some transition out of it. She also provides a detailed and thorough account of how homelessness has been considered and discussed in recent years, touching upon what she calls a 'new orthodoxy' to view homelessness, one that moves beyond the individual reasons or causes and consequences that has so typified much of the research in the area and is discussed in detail later in this chapter. She shows that this 'new orthodoxy' is still not fully developed but includes elements of agency, marginalisation and the plurality of factors that contribute to not just the phenomenon of homelessness but how it is considered. For the purpose of this study, this is one of the key points in her book, showing clearly not just the multifaceted nature of homelessness, but the diversity of approaches that can be utilised in its study. There is, however, a second point, one similar to Glasser and Bridgman's, that is more significant and important to this study, and this is the framing that McNaughton uses. Here she presents homelessness as a social problem that can be unpicked, examined and ultimately understood through the application of social science. It is a broader and more inclusive position than that underpinning Glasser and Bridgman's anthropological approach, and is totemic, reflecting much of the framing in the literature

on homelessness. It is the context that this study sits within, a framing of homelessness that sees it as a problem that properly understood can be managed or reduced.

2.2.2 Counting Homelessness

An issue central to the understanding of homelessness and the significance it has for society, one that is both widely contested and difficult to undertake, is the quantification of the numbers of people who are homeless (Jencks, 1995, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (a), 2019, Jocoy, 2012, Straw, 1995). It is an area of research crucial to the formulation of social policy, attracting both governmental and independent research. It is also a way to frame the extent of the problem by showing the scale of it and therefore answering the question of why so much time and resource needs to be spent in tackling it. The reasons for the difficulties in counting are several, with one of the biggest being the methodological issues faced due to the nature of homelessness, specifically the problems of locating and identifying a population that is frequently hidden or unwilling to engage with the authorities (Auerswald et al., 2013, Fitzpatrick et al., 2019, London Assembly Housing Committee, 2017). Additionally, The UK's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (a) (2019) claims that there is a broadness and diversity within homelessness, including such groups as 'rough sleepers' and hidden groups that increase the difficulty of quantification still further.

Another problematic area with respect to quantifying homelessness is linked to the motivation of those undertaking the counting. Bassuk (1995) suggests that one of the main reasons for wanting to count homelessness is to help secure resources. Undeniably, without numbers it is hard to advocate for a position or influence social policy aimed at dealing with homelessness. However, measuring the numbers is not a straightforward task, instead, it has become a broad and complicated subject, where different groups, with their vested interests, affect the calculations and reporting of numbers. Jencks (1995) illustrates this by showing how estimates made in the 1970s of homeless numbers in the US being over one million "had no meaning, no value" (p.2), and were fabricated. He argues that this was an overestimation used to drive up media and political attention, and that the real numbers of homeless people in the US at this time were nearer 250,000 to 350,000 people (ibid). Jencks argues that there are

some inherent problems in counting homeless people, driven by competing agendas and often at odds with the actual empirical numbers, resulting in both overestimations, as in the above example, and also, perhaps more commonly, underestimations.

Chamberlin and Mackenzie (1992) bring additional insight to the conflict that exists in measuring the number of homeless people. They suggest that there are two quite different methodological ways in which the homeless population can be quantified. The first is a census count over a single night and the second is an exercise that counts over an extended period (usually at least one year). They see both methods as having some legitimacy, but that they can result in the production of very different numbers of homeless people. Jocoy (2012) argues that the issue of counting homeless people is something far more complicated than just measuring 'heads'. She argues that there is a culture of quantification in the US that not only distracts from the real issues that homeless people face, but also delivers a false sense of doing good by those involved. She criticises this overreliance on quantification to define a problem and argues that in the US this has been wholly inadequate for informing social policy and a much more informed approach should be adopted.

A final issue with trying to count the number of homeless people lies in how they are defined, something that several authors (Cordray and Pion, 2010, Jacobs et al., 1999, Straw, 1995) argue affects the quantification significantly. This is the area I will tackle next.

2.2.3 Defining and Identifying Homeless People

Identifying who exactly homeless people are is an important and contested area of research (McNaughton, 2008). Pleace (2016) argues that definitions have a significant impact on all subsequent theories on the subject, affecting narratives on homelessness and the many conclusions and recommendations made in its regard. It is also something central to this study which requires examination. Jacobs et al. (1999) provide a powerful account of the ways defining homelessness has changed and been influenced by competing factions over the last decades in Britain. They claim that the most powerful faction has been central government, which has tried to assert its ideological viewpoint

into defining homelessness. Jacobs et al. (1999) illustrate this point, arguing that there is a clear historical path for how homelessness has been defined since the 1960s in the UK. This has roots in the rediscovery of poverty in social science research in this period and the subsequent conceptualisation of it as a social problem. They see public opinions towards homelessness as evolving and developing, influenced by governmental policy and resulting in growing interest and detailing of how homelessness is thought of and defined. Somerville (1992) argues that there is deep disagreement across authors on defining homelessness, something that not only affects its quantification, but also how research is undertaken and results interpreted. He sees it, much like the issue of counting homelessness, as deeply ideological, complex and multidimensional, one where ideal definitions and those based on reality clash.

In practice, much of the research does not delve deeply into the debate around defining homelessness, instead utilising existing definitions or creating ones that reflect their areas of focus. Bramley (1988) provides one of the best-known definitions, stating that homelessness is about "lack of a right or access to their own secure and minimally adequate housing space" (p.26). Cebulla et al. (2009) developed a categorisation system for homelessness, identifying three groups; first-time rough sleepers, people who have slept rough for a least two years and those that leave rough sleeping only to return to it at a later date. They, like others (Belcher, 1989, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992, McNaughton, 2008), seek to differentiate between the kinds of homeless populations that exist. It is an approach that has been accepted in much of the literature, where different situations, circumstances or population, such as rough sleepers, families, long-term, youth, the mentally unwell, shelter sleepers, etc. are all used to separate the kinds of people who are homeless. It is an approach that has its merits, bringing a level of recognition to the fact that different groups in different contexts can experience homeless differently.

However, although these broad levels of differentiation are important and provide a welcome perspective leading to appreciation of the multifaceted nature of homelessness, it is the definition identified in Chapter One, from Homeless Link (2016), that I would like to return to as I finish this section. This is a definition that foregrounds accommodation but is also broad enough to capture some of the main categories of homelessness. It is a definition that goes some way towards recognising the multidimensionality of the phenomenon and one that is relative to its context (McNaughton, 2008).

2.2.4 The Social Construction of Homelessness

An important and insightful area in the literature on homelessness comes from a social constructionist perspective, which proposes that "people make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them" (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010, p.173). The work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) is widely regarded as the first formal work on the subject, however Burr (2003) argues that it is impossible to trace social constructionism back to a single source and that it instead should be viewed as something influenced by many thinkers, schools, and bodies of work, such as De Beauvoir (1949), Durkheim (1951), Derrida (1976), Foucault (1969) and Marx (1888).

Social constructionist approaches to homelessness see it as an issue of human understanding that is constructed by society and the power structures that exist within it. Jacobs et al. (1999) argue that this constructionist approach to understanding homelessness began to gain ground in the UK in the 1990s, due in part to the growing disquiet with the structural and individual approaches discussed above. They highlight how this new approach has essentially examined how power in society has been exercised in the construction of homelessness as a problem. This is a position that Feldman (2004) takes within his detailed account of homeless people, evidencing how they are frequently denied citizenship. It is a framing of homelessness that is deeply political, where he argues that losing one's dwelling reduces the individual to something less than human, and that the corresponding literature seems to respond to this in a way similar to how animal cruelty is discussed. He argues that the way homelessness is understood is more than a simple perspective shift and is instead something that has contributed to its occurrence. It is a powerful framing of homelessness, showing how political and societal power converged to create a narrative that further marginalises this population and creates an environment that patronises.

O'Neil (2017) provides an account that although separated by thousands of miles and a very different socio-political context from Feldman, basing his study of homelessness in Bucharest Romania, shares much in common with his findings. He delivers a polemic account of homelessness, illustrating how it has become a major issue with the change of the political-economic situation that has followed the end of Soviet Communism. O'Neil's focus is on the boredom that plagues homeless people in Bucharest, painting a picture that is hard and grim. However, here its importance lies in is his framing of

homelessness in terms of the consequence of liberal capitalism, showing how the economic and personal freedom this has brought Romania has also led to poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

O'Neil and Feldman provide accounts about homelessness that pinpoint its causes in the prevailing social-political structures. Their work shows how political power conspires to marginalise, through economic and social policy, a sub-class of people, creating a narrative that demonises, disenfranchises and ultimately creates a homeless population. Here Foucault (1975) offers some thought to this line of reason, specifically when he discusses power, saying that "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (Foucault, 1975, p.194). This is the key point for Feldman and O'Neil's work, as they show homeless people as a product of a political system, and their circumstances as a product of society and its associated culture. This viewpoint brings up some interesting and important issues. Firstly, it questions the validity of the individual culpability model for homelessness discussed previously. Secondly, it suggests that simple social policy responses aimed at alleviating homelessness would make little difference. Thirdly, and importantly for this study, it begs the question of how the lived experience of homeless people is affected by a hegemonic political system, one that may be a causation factor in their homelessness and where asymmetry in power relations makes it hard for them to resist this, such that the opportunity to restore their previous lives is curtailed.

Social constructionist approaches to homelessness do not all pursue the macro-social political position as above. For example, Cronely (2010) discusses the importance of social public policy in mitigating the problems faced by being homeless and how poorly informed decisions, based on either individualistic or structural causes, has compounded these problems. She argues that instead an approach that recognises the construction of the issue by society and its agents is required for a more meaningful debate about homelessness. From a different angle, Jeffery (1999) looks at how individuals, rather than groups, construct their theories around the reasons for homelessness. She explores how a variety of individuals involved in or experiencing homelessness constructed their narratives on the subject. This is an interesting position, one that puts the person and their experience at the heart of the phenomenon of homelessness rather than seeing it merely as a consequence of external factors. Jeffery uses this theorisation to talk about how tailoring social response would make actions aimed at alleviating homelessness more effectively. However, instead I see her method of research as a much more insightful

one, where individuals are engaged in conversation about how they frame their own experience, an approach similarly applied in this study.

There is a growing body of literature applying social constructionism to the issue of homelessness (see Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016, Järvinen, 1995, Parsell, 2011). It is an approach that is diverse and varied, providing both insight and evidence as to the importance of how the phenomenon of homelessness is framed. It is a body of literature that calls into question the individualistic, structural or combined approaches that so dominate the literature. It is also an approach that brings into sharp focus how the framing of homelessness affects the lives of people who are homeless, from the policy response to the general attitudes of a society. Parsell (2011) takes this a step further and argues that the frequent negative framing of homeless people renders them as mere objects of the prevailing discourse, a situation where they are at risk of having the meaning and understanding of their lives foisted upon them.

For this study the framing of homelessness is a crucial element as it provides the context that the phenomenon exists within and also explains the reasons behind the various social policy initiatives taken in this area. The social constructionist perspective recognises the importance that the prevailing political and social power structures have on the phenomenon, something that Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) argue is critical if understanding homelessness is to be achieved. It is also an approach that recognises the importance of discourse, by which I mean the way events are represented and meaning brought though language to our understanding of homelessness. Here Foucault (1969, 1976) offers some additional insight, seeing discourse as not only a product of a particular period and culture, but also as something that is intimately intertwined with the prevailing power structures in society. This study seeks to examine the lived experience of homeless men, and here the social constructionist approach provides an insight into the importance of the framing of this and the discourse that is a consequence of it.

2.2.5 The Causes of Homelessness

Across the literature of homelessness the causes for people becoming homeless are a prominent feature. This is a topic that shapes public opinion, informs social policy (see Liddiard, 1999) and is of key

importance to all those wanting to understand more about the phenomenon of homelessness. The causes of homelessness are not something specifically dealt with in this study, however its prominence in the literature and influence on the framing of homelessness requires some careful consideration and will be examined next.

There are several, often competing, ways in which people are believed to become homeless. Pleace (2016) claims that these typically fall into two camps of thought, with one seeing it as a result of individual culpability, through a person's behaviour or characteristics, and the other seeing it as a result of structural factors (see also Johnson et al., 1991). Glasser and Bridgman (1999) describe the individual culpability perspective in terms of a personal pathology route into homelessness. This perspective accounts for a significant portion of the literature and has influenced both social policy and public opinion of homelessness (McNaughton, 2008). It is a perspective frequently divided into two main branches, one that concentrates on the mental health issues of individuals and how this may increase the risk factors of becoming homeless (Belcher 1989, Martens, 2001, The Mental Health Foundation, 2015), and the other on how the effects of drugs, alcohol and crime can lead to an individual becoming homeless (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2013, Mallett et al., 2005, Reeve et al., 2009). These works are empirical, driven by observation, interviews and first-hand accounts, and illustrate clearly the kind of circumstances that may lead, or at least contribute, to someone becoming homeless. However, it would be wrong to see them as ascribing to the notion that the only reason for people succumbing to homelessness is individualistic, as instead they provide evidence of the possible contributory nature personal circumstances may have. In fact, it is clear that causation solely due to individualistic reasons has been "almost universally rejected" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2000, p.19) across academic research in this field. Those works cited and many others, at least in recent years, are generally careful to avoid attributing too much blame to personal circumstances and instead frame the individual factors in terms of increasing risk rather than something that alone leads to homelessness. Even so, it is still a point of view that ascribes some level of responsibility for homelessness to the individual, a position that reflects the wider debate in social science over the level of agency individuals have over their lives compared to the impact of the societal structures they live in. Much of this debate lies outside the scope of this study. However, given the nature of this study, a short discussion about this individual causation perspective from a phenomenological position is warranted to understand its relevance.

This individualistic causation perspective for homelessness is one based on the notion that individuals have a level of agency or authorship over their lives, a view that can be traced back to the Enlightenment. It is a position that views people as fundamentally rational and able to make the most appropriate decisions about their own lives. It is a viewpoint that the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962) tackled, saying that "rationality is precisely proportioned to the experiences in which it is disclosed" (p.xxii), by which he means our rationality is not something set apart from our lives, existing in a realm outside our experience, but it is instead part of our lived experience, where we are required to live from moment to moment. Phenomenology sees people as not predisposed to being either rational or irrational (Wharne et al., 2012) and instead sees this as just another aspect of their lived experience. The second aspect of this individual agency argument for homelessness, when seen through a phenomenological lens, concerns the notion that individuals can make their own decisions free from the influence of others. Here again, Merleau-Ponty (1962) offers some important insight, saying that our phenomenological world is not one of "pure being" (ibid), but instead is something revealed to us through our interactions and engagement with others. It is a position which claims that our lives gain meaning and understanding through living, and this inextricably brings us into contact with others and the societal structures they build. This is not to deny that we have some autonomy or agency over our lives, but instead acknowledges that our lived experience is of this world and as we impact the world so are we impacted by it. Therefore, phenomenology does not dismiss the claim that individuals may bear some responsibility for becoming homeless, that they have some agency regarding the circumstance, however, it sees the lived experience as being made up of a multitude of factors including the societal structures the person inhabits. This is a point that takes us to the second side of the debate on the causes of homelessness, and those that ascribe a much more structural reason to it.

The structural perspective on people becoming homeless seeks to explain this by avoiding the personal pathology approach and instead focuses on societal factors for causation. Glasser and Bridgman (1999) explain this in terms of how the broad external social conditions faced by individuals impact on their ability to avoid homelessness. These social conditions include such things as a lack of social housing, low income, unemployment, and accommodation costs. One of the most important structural factors leading to homelessness, according to the literature, is related to the availability of affordable accommodation (Belcher and Di Blasio, 1990, Elliott and Krivo, 1991). Elliot and Krivo (1991) conducted a quantitative evaluation across sixty US metropolitan areas and concluded that several structural factors lead to

homelessness and that the lack of low-cost housing was the single biggest factor. More recent research by CRISIS (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019) delivers a very comprehensive review of structural factors that can cause homelessness, focussing heavily again upon the issue of accommodation, where they provide a clear picture of how individuals who struggle to secure or afford accommodation as a result of changes in the housing market, lack of adequate housing benefit and other issues, are more likely to become homeless (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019). Anderson and Christian (2003) offer additional insight into this area, arguing that homelessness also needs to be understood as something affected by the politics, and specifically welfare ideologies, of the day, seeing the interaction of both macroeconomic and more individualistic factors such as race affecting the risk of becoming homeless. They, like much of the literature in this area, do not seek to explain homelessness solely as a result of structural factors, but they do show that societal structures and the culture this creates can be a significant contributory factor and should not be underestimated in their importance with respect to the creation of homeless populations.

Again, I would like to consider and offer some critique of this structural perspective through the lens of phenomenology, and in doing so to understand its relevance to this study. I have already laid out the importance that phenomenology ascribes to the lived experience of the individual, viewing our embodied experience as both shaping and being shaped by the social structures and societal constitutions it inhabits (Mocombe, 2017). We are, according to Heidegger ([1927] 2010), beings-in-the-world, a place where the influences of others and the structures they produce come to us as we turn our consciousness toward them. We are part of a social world and find meaning in the interactions we have with it (Wharne et al., 2012). Therefore, for phenomenology, understanding the world with its structures and associated culture that people become homeless in is critical, not necessarily as a causation factor, although this may be true, but due to the understanding of the lived experience of homeless people.

This framing of homelessness as caused by either an individual's behaviour or the structures of society, a causation dichotomy, is ubiquitous across the literature. It presents the phenomenon of homelessness in a way that sees people as either the cause or the victim of the constructs of society for becoming homeless. It is a way of thinking about homelessness that this study avoids, seeking to not apportion blame or culpability to individuals or society, but instead moving beyond this debate in an attempt to understand how individuals experience their world and how they account for it. It is an approach that

does not deny causation, but instead asks how this matters to the person, and how it is revealed to them in their lived experience. This is something that the literature that concentrates on causation typically fails to address.

Beyond this dichotomous debate between individualistic culpability and structural reasons, other authors have suggested different reasons for homelessness that also require some examination here. The first of these is known as the 'new orthodoxy' (McNaughton, 2008), combining elements of both the individualistic and structural positions discussed above. Pleace (2016) claims that this position arose in the 1990s through a growing frustration between these two camps, and contends that homelessness was neither due to individual or structural factors but instead the interaction of the two. This approach recognises that there is a complex relationship taking place between the two factors, a relationship dependent on the circumstances and the person involved (McNaughton, 2008). It is an approach that bridges the gap between the individual and structural views, bringing to the fore a much more holistic appreciation of the subject of the causes of homelessness. Although some of the same criticism levelled at the dichotomous approaches discussed above also applies here, there is a new element this position raises that needs some further examination due to its resonance with one aspect of this study, as discussed next.

Pleace (2016) provides an insightful summary of this new orthodoxy approach, explaining how it conceives of homelessness as a combination of factors including housing markets, the benefits system, social housing availability, and factors relating to individual needs, such as behaviour and personal characteristics. He makes several important points about this approach of interest to this study, particularly that the risk of becoming homeless is due to the 'wrong' combination of these structural and personal elements, a "negative assemblage" (Pleace 2016, p.26) of these factors so to speak. It is a viewpoint similar to McNaughton's above, one that implies a level of uniqueness to the causation and so the experience of those becoming homeless. This is an interesting point, which concurs with the objectives of this study and the wider phenomenological position about the uniqueness rather than the commonality of an individual's lived experience. This new orthodoxy also raises another important point for this study, that is how the framing of homelessness has over the years developed and moved beyond basic notions of linear causation. It is an example of a growing sophisticated appreciation of the causes of homelessness, where the framing of it is seen as something complicated and nuanced, where there is

a multiplicity of factors at play and where the phenomenon can be viewed multi-dimensionally. It is a viewpoint that resonates with that of this study, particularly in terms of seeing homelessness as a phenomenon that is diverse and multifaceted.

There are other ways in which the causes of homelessness have been reviewed, including career (Reeve et al., 2007, Snow and Anderson, 1993) and pathway approaches (Anderson and Tulloch, 2000, Clapham, 2003, Crane, 1999, Fitzpatrick, 2000). However, they bring little additional insight to this study and instead I will move on to examine the literature that deals specifically with the consequences of homelessness, an area that has more relevance.

2.2.6 The Consequences of Homelessness

The literature on the causes of homelessness is extensive, but it is dwarfed by the bodies of work focused on the consequences of becoming homeless. In the second part of this chapter I will examine in detail the anthropological and phenomenological literature that explores the consequences of homelessness. In this section I will look at the broader non-phenomenological literature related to the issues of addiction and mental health and their relevance to this study.

The St. Mungo's (Bilton, 2009) report into homelessness in London is a clear portrayal of how homelessness can affect one's mental health. They claim, following an intensive piece of research where they interviewed over one hundred homeless people, that even those who start out in good mental health are still at risk of developing mental health issues if they become homeless. They found a high proportion, around 86%, of their participants felt they had, or had been formally diagnosed with, some mental health problems. This ranged from stress, anxiety and depression to the more serious issues of bipolar disorder, long-term mental illness, or schizophrenia. Their research and that discussed in the majority of the literature on the subject (see Middleton, 2008, Murphy et al., 2002, Rees, 2009) shows categorically that the homeless population is disproportionally more susceptible to mental health issues than the general public. The debate that exists here is centred around the actual occurrence of such issues within this population, the causes for this and policy responses to dealing with it, all of which reside beyond the scope of this study. However, what is interesting for this study is the methodology

applied, specifically the self-reporting undertaken by St. Mungo's and others (see Bines 1994, Homeless Link, 2014) and what this reveals about the homeless.

Reading the comments from the participants in the St. Mungo's study and considering the more general point of homeless people self-diagnosing their mental health status, suggests that there is more going on here than simply a data collecting exercise. It intimates that the homeless participants are applying a degree of thought to theirs and others' mental health situations, a perspective or framing of the issue by themselves that is seemingly ignored by the literature. This leaves open the question of how homeless people think about and frame mental health, especially given that the literature above shows they are willing to not only self-diagnose but also to offer a level of consideration about the broad social policy of this topic. As a phenomenological study I want to examine how the participants of this study experienced and brought meaning to their physical and mental health, to move beyond the quantification and description of mental health problems with this population and to see how mental (and physical) health impacts their world and what this means to them.

A second consequence of becoming homeless that populates the literature is the subject of addiction and specifically alcoholism. It is a subject that is often seen as a defining aspect of homelessness and is one of the more common stereotypes used to describe homeless people. It is also a topic that has stimulated a great deal of literature, too large to examine in its totality, so instead I will focus on several key pieces of research particularly relevant to this study. Spradley (1970) offers one the first modern studies of homelessness and alcoholism. He takes an urban ethnographic approach to illustrate the strong connection between being homeless and drinking, and critically how society treats people who do not conform to its expectations. It is a book that captures well the lived experience of homeless inhabitants of Seattle's skid row and will be explored in more detail later. More modern research has focussed on a number of issues surrounding heavy drinking, including its quantification (McQuistion et al., 2013, Robertson et al., 1990, Randall and Brown, 1996), its link to mental health issues (Bilton, 2009, Rees, 2009) and how it is used as a coping strategy by many people who are homeless. This last issue is of interest to this study, as it is much more about the experience of drinking and how homeless people bring meaning to doing it. St. Mungo's (Bilton, 2009) showed that amongst their clients over two-thirds felt that alcohol (and other drugs) helped them cope with their homeless lives and emotional well-being. This is a point that Sanders and Brown (2015) draw attention to, claiming that alcohol is often used to

manage loneliness. Their research provides a telling narrative of the commonality of alcoholism or heavy drinking amongst homeless people, including accounts of individuals experiencing profound loneliness as a result of their homelessness describing alcohol as their only and best friend.

Ross-Houle et al. (2017) provide a more comprehensive and insightful study of heavy drinking and homelessness. Theirs is a qualitative study, where twelve homeless participants were recruited and interviewed via a semi-structured approach to understand how their life events affected their alcohol consumption. They found a number of themes about alcohol consumption, including the use of it as a coping mechanism, increasing when support from friends and family was low. This is an interesting finding and illustrates the importance that the social world has on the lived experience of homeless people.

A second and slightly more nuanced finding in their research was the distinction they found between the participants regarding attitudes and behaviours towards drinking. One example stands out and illustrates this well, that being the discrimination towards different brands and types of alcohol that the participants had. They say that "the type of alcohol consumed was an important point to some of the participants who were keen to avoid being associated with particular brands as they felt that they had certain stereotypes attached to them" (Ross-Houle et al., 2017, p.11). This is a revealing and insightful finding, something that brings real light and insight to the role of alcohol in the lives of the participants. Although my study is not specifically focussed on alcoholism or heavy drinking and homelessness, the desire is to bring similar revelations about the lived experience of homeless men to the fore, providing a picture of their lifeworld that is both richly descriptive and insightful, something akin to the examples of Ross-Houle et al's study.

There are many other topics in the literature relating to the consequences of homelessness, including criminality (Lee and Schreck, 2005, NACRO, 2006, Sadiki, 2016), stigma (Belcher and DeForge, 2012, Kidd, 2007, Phelan et al., 1997, Rayburn and Guittar, 2013, Sanders and Brown, 2015) and loneliness (Rokach 2004, Sanders and Brown, 2015). These all bring additional perspective and insight to the phenomenon of homelessness, and generally show the level of hardship and suffering this population can experience. Time and space restrict the opportunity to examine all of these here and instead I will use the second part of this chapter to bring some of the most important of these to light and to provide commentary on how they help to inform this study.

2.3 The Literature on the Lived Experience of Being Homeless

2.3.1 Introduction

In this section of the chapter some of the most relevant works on the lived experience of being homeless will be reviewed and their relevance to this study discussed. The first section will focus on some of the biographical accounts of homelessness, showing how they frame homelessness from a first-person perspective and what this means for this study. The next section will examine some of the most relevant anthropological ethnographies and sociological studies that populate the literature. The final section will examine in detail the small number of phenomenological studies that explore homelessness and are the closest to this study.

2.3.2 Biographical Accounts of Homelessness

Biographical accounts of homelessness are a popular and growing body of literature that has brought understanding and interest to the field. They are works that are not restricted by the rigours of academic research and therefore they need to be treated carefully when being considered as a source of valid and accurate information. Despite this, they do offer another potential source of insight and illumination into the lived experience of homeless people. Here I will focus on how these works portray the realities of homelessness, exploring what this means for this study and for the overall phenomenon of homelessness.

I start with Davies's (1908) autobiographical account of being a tramp in the US, where he describes in rich detail his experience of travelling the roads and railways, begging and seeking sustenance in the Nineteenth Century. He paints a surprisingly rosy picture of this time in his life, one where companionship and humour were plentiful. It is an account that would seem to be at odds with much that has followed in the literature, especially the grim realities of homelessness that have so populated both non-fiction accounts and academic research in recent years. However, his tale is not so anomalous, with its harking back to the romantic image of the wandering tramp, the person afoot in the world, free and untroubled. It is a view of homelessness that has percolated through the literature of homelessness,

including in the work of Jusserand (1889) and Serafino (2018), and in more recent works by Bowen (2012), Carroll (2013) and Maharidge (1993). It is a way of seeing homelessness that is quite different from the general orthodoxy of seeing it as a problem that needs solving. Davies provides a view of homelessness that represents a juxtaposition, delivering a perspective at odds to the accepted view of the issue. It is a perspective that I aim to take into account as I explore homelessness in this study, seeing if the grim picture typically portrayed in the literature represents the totality that is the experience of being homeless or whether accounts such as Davies's provide some alternative insight.

Turning next to Orwell (1933) and his account of being a tramp in Paris and London, we come back to a more familiar picture of the experience of homelessness. Orwell's book provides a rich account of the desperate situation that homeless people faced in and around Paris and London during the 1920s. He paints a picture that captures the desperation, poverty and sheer harshness of the homeless experience. There are many modern versions of Orwell's story, which generally also show the grim realities of homelessness, and here Healy's (1998) account of his 15 years of alcoholism and living on the streets of London in the 1960s and '70s, delivers a particularly powerful and disturbing account. His, and the many others in this genre, further cement the popular framing of homelessness as something harsh and to be avoided. They deliver a narrative that is compelling, and although there are some limitations to these works as discussed above, they are a powerful influence on how homelessness is seen by many. Of course, this framing is important for this study, reiterating and providing more evidence with respect to the academic literature on the experience of being homeless. However, there is one additional point that I would like to make about these autobiographical accounts, something that takes place even with those works that see some positivity in the experience of homelessness, and this is the notion of redemption. With few exceptions, these works, especially some of the more recent ones (Bowen, 2012, Carroll, 2013, Healy 1998) all involve the authors returning to the world of the homed. They are told as stories of personal and moral victory over the deplorable state of homelessness. This is a powerful framing, and one that also populates the academic literature. It is a framing of homelessness as something needing to be escaped from. It is homelessness as a circumstance of hardship and deprivation, a framing of homeless that this study will take on, showing that, as in Davies' (1908) case, some aspects of being homeless are not only okay but can also be enlivening, and that redemption from it is not always welcome or needed.

As bodies of work these biographical accounts differ in one critical aspect from the academic studies above, in that they are written with the general audience in mind, being entirely personal and partial. They are important to this study due to the impact they have on both their readership and the wider audience interested in homelessness. They are nuanced, like so much literature on homelessness, but generally appear to have furthered, with the exceptions noted, the construction that homelessness is something harsh and barely tolerable.

2.3.3 Ethnographic Studies of Homelessness

A major body of work that is important for this study are those ethnographic studies by sociologists and anthropologists of the lives of homeless people. These works share many of the methodological elements of this phenomenological study. I will examine some of the most influential works in this area to understand how they have sought to understand homelessness and how this relates to this study.

One of the first, and still very influential, ethnographic studies is Spradley's (1970) account of homelessness in Seattle in the 1960s. This was an 'urban anthropology' of the inner world of homeless people and their daily experience. Spradley's objective was to discover the 'native point of view' of how the homeless men who populated Skid Row saw themselves and the culture they lived in. Spradley focusses heavily on the language of the men, particularly consideration of 'native' language. However, what is interesting for this study was his description and thoughts around the experience of arrest and incarceration, a regular aspect of the men's lives. Here Spradley explores the effect of this on individuals, showing how the process of repeatedly being arrested, gaoled and then released, further socialises the men into the world of homelessness. Spradley reveals an interesting point here, showing how identity amongst homeless men is constructed, at least in part, through the actions of the authorities, and is compounded by the subsequent detrimental effect this has on their lives. It is a construction of a level of shared identity, one which Spradley leans upon the work of Goffman (1961) to elucidate. Although Spradley does not make any claim about some universal shared homeless identity, his work provides insight into how the lived experiences of being homeless affect the identity of the person. Identity is not an area that my study tackles, but Spradley's examination into how the experience of being homeless affects the person is something at the heart of this study.

A more modern and equally excellent ethnographic study of homelessness is Snow and Anderson's (1993) study into homeless single men in Austin, Texas between the autumn of 1984 and the summer of 1986. It is an account of homeless men which seeks to explore the experience of living on the streets, dealing with hostel accommodation and the multitude of strategies that homeless men employ to manage their lives. Their research was split between tracking homeless men through the network of institutions such as hostels and soup kitchens, and spending time outside these places listening and interviewing homeless men in situ. Snow and Anderson worked hard at fitting in with the homeless men, which included moderating their academic language, wearing clothes that were appropriate and generally doing their best to win the trust and confidence of the men. This is something I recognised as important for my research, and care in my behaviour when interviewing and around my participants was at the forefront of my approach.

A particularly interesting aspect of Snow and Anderson's study are the chapters that seek to document and understand the many challenges homeless men face in finding and securing paid work, taking on the stereotypical claim that homeless men are lazy and eschew regular work. Snow and Anderson are successful in providing a clear picture of the difficulties, barriers and challenges that many homeless men come up against in finding work despite their driving desire to do so. They are effective in showing that the popular and negative stereotype of homeless men being lazy or work-shy is not only a gross exaggeration of the situation but misses the grim competitive reality of poorly paid employment and how economic and social structures perpetuate a circumstance that is biased against homeless men securing work. It is a point that I will take further in this study.

A more recent ethnographic study of homelessness is Wasserman and Clair's 2010 study in Birmingham, Alabama. This was a multi-dimensional research project, including filming, interviews, observation and short periods of living alongside a variety of homeless people on the streets, in hostels and at other locations where they discovered homeless people spend their time. The intention was to employ maximum variation sampling in selecting their participants, and they ended up interviewing, observing and interacting with countless homeless people, although it is unclear of the exact demographics that were included. It is a study which explores and examines the dichotomy that exists between homeless

people and homed people, the 'us' and 'them' situation that exists across many of the experiences in which homeless people find themselves.

One specific area of their research that resonates with this study is the question of why many homeless people avoid the relative comfort of sheltered or hostel accommodation in favour of the streets. It is a theme that occurs across much of the literature and something that this study also explored. Wasserman and Clair showed that there was a high proportion of homeless people who made this choice and that rather than being an ill-informed or foolish choice this was something rational and sensible for them. They show that actually the avoidance of hostels and shelters is a choice born from the fact that such places are often difficult, dangerous or simply not easy places to be. They also found that there was stigma attached to staying in these places. Their study, like Snow and Anderson's, takes on some of the prevailing notions about the lives of homeless people and, using detailed and varied qualitative research, reveals a compelling counter argument that also paints a much more positive and nuanced view of the experience of being homeless, something my study plans to further build upon.

A final ethnography that deserves some attention here is Hopper's (2003) study. Hopper has been researching and writing about homelessness for decades and this account shows his deep and insightful understanding of the topic. Hopper explains that there are two fundamental methods in anthropology; fieldwork based, where a researcher investigates the lived reality of the group or individual in their environment, and framework based research, which looks at tackling the conditions of the object of study by tracking its changing configuration, predominantly through the interrogation of records, archival documents and other relevant material. Hopper's book covers both these aspects, re-visiting some of his previous field research and re-engaging with many of the framework issues he tackled in the past. There are several parts of his work that bear significance for this study. The first is his primary focus on homeless men. He focusses on this group as he feels single homeless men have set both the pace and framing of much of our understanding of homelessness and he claims that the history of vagrancy has been one dominated by the history of "men on the road or the skids" (Hopper, 2003, p.13). He also makes the point that much of the public disquiet, and even outright hostility, towards homelessness from the wider public has been aimed at this population, and this is an important point for this study. Much of the framing of homeless men discussed in the literature is either negative or, at best, patronising, and

this, as Hopper points out, is centred on the dominant group of homeless people who are single men, even if this is just the perception by the wider general public.

Another part of Hopper's study which I would like to examine here is his discussion of the coexistence of homeless people living in public spaces and the homed community they come into contact with. This intersubjective element between the two distinct groups is something curious and of interest to this study, which intends to examine the relationship between the participants and other people. Hopper's chapter on homeless men living in airports illustrates the interconnectedness between them and the homed population well. Here Hopper delivers a clear depiction of how the airport workers interact and work alongside the homeless residents in a benign and concerned fashion. He paints a picture of care and consideration undertaken to accommodate the homeless men, including such things as ensuring food is available and going out of their way to help when needed. This is an interesting phenomenon, showing that the homed population, when presented with homeless people that were vulnerable and non-threatening, would take measures to accommodate them as best they could. It shows an intersubjective world with a positive relationship, something apart from and contrary to the typical stereotypes. Hopper shows a level of humanity, where people have the propensity to help homeless people when they can, and this was something I was keen explore with respect to the participants of my study, including how this could affect their lived experience.

There are many other ethnographic studies of homelessness (Bridgman, 2002, Cloke et al., 2010, Hall, 2003, Hoolachan, 2016) and we can expect more to come. They typically provide a rich insight into the lives of homeless people and offer some worthwhile research into the realities of homelessness. They also provide a rich source of data on the actual experiences of homeless people, testing and challenging many of the typical stereotypes and misconceptions that abound. For this study, they provided a useful backbone of research, frequently introducing new insights and descriptions that were useful and necessary.

2.3.4 Phenomenological Studies of Homelessness

This last section examines phenomenological accounts of homelessness, literature that is sparse compared to the other areas considered in this chapter, but of much more importance and relevance to this study. There are five specific accounts of homelessness that I will examine here, each bringing insight into how the subject can be examined from a phenomenological perspective, which will help to provide context and background and to further the case for this study.

I begin with Watts's (2012) study, which is divided into two sections. The first is a literature review of trauma experienced by homeless men and the second is a phenomenological examination of the lived experience of ten people (seven men and three women) who are homeless. Watts uses an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to guide her study. She uses a qualitative methodology that is built upon one semi-structured interview with each participant. Before looking at the detailed findings of her study I would like to mention a point that she makes early on, one that is taken fully on board in this study. This is her claim that her study reveals the uniqueness of experiences of participants and the commonalities in how they ascribed meaning to these experiences. The uniqueness of an individual's experience combined with a desire to identify common patterns amongst these experiences is an important element of phenomenology and is taken fully on board by Watts. In her study she applies a level of thematic analysis, informed by the IPA approach, to uncover meaning for these experiences that are shared by the participants. In so doing, she uncovers two main themes - trauma and responsibility - which she then breaks down into subordinate and component themes.

Her selection of trauma is an interesting element, something that was mentioned by all her participants about their experiences in their past and something that Watts sees as providing a "contextual background" (Watts, 2012, p. 97) to their present lived experience. Trauma is certainly something that my study will also explore but I am wary, as is Watts, of suggesting some level of causation of trauma for becoming homeless. For Watts, she sees it as a critical back story to the participants' lives and for my part I seek to remain open to exploring its meaning for the men in my study in their terms should it arise. The second overarching theme is 'responsibility', which looks at how her participants made sense of the things that happened to them and the reactions they had to these experiences. There are many positive and illuminating elements in Watts's findings, such as how the participants felt a level of

responsibility for their circumstance. However this was something I steered clear of exploring in my study for fear of moving from a phenomenological account to something more psycho-clinical. However, it is her section on relationships that I want to draw attention to as it is an aspect strongly related to my study. Here Watts provides significant insight into the experience of isolation and loneliness felt by the participants through becoming homeless. She shows how the participants felt a diminishment of trust with peers, leading to further social exclusion and loneliness, only mitigated when positive relationships with others were established. The impact and effect of relationships that homeless people experience is something my study will focus heavily on. Watts's account begins to set out some of the issues here, something that I will delve deeper into.

An older study that focuses on the lived experience of homeless men is Lafuente and Lane's (1995) study of ten homeless men in the US. Through semi-structured interviews they sought to explore the reasons homeless men gave for becoming homeless, how they felt about being socially disaffiliated and how they go about sustaining their lives on the street. The study was heavily grounded in Bahr's (1973) Social Disaffiliation Theory and also utilised the phenomenology of Giorgi (1970-2019). Their method was a multi-step undertaking, beginning with the lived experience of each participant captured through a semi-structured recorded interview, with the transcripts subsequently reviewed and patterns identified, enabling descriptions of the phenomenological meaning to be clarified and presented in their findings.

Lafuente and Lane uncover three major categories of descriptions of the homeless men's activities; rejection, uncertainty, and social isolation. Each is compelling and reveals lifeworlds that are complicated, nuanced and harsh. It is the social isolation theme that I would like to examine as it is something that my study will also explore. In this section of their findings, Lafuente and Lane describe how many of the participants felt disconnected from families, friends and other homeless people. It is homelessness as an experience of severe isolation, something where both physical and psychosocial needs were severely diminished, resulting in dependence on institutional support, such as shelters and soup kitchens. It is a set of findings confirmed in other studies (Rokach, 2004, Sanders and Brown, 2015) and which Lafuente and Lane bring to life in their study. It is also a finding mirrored in Watts's study above and one that my study sets out to build upon, specifically looking to explore the relationships homeless men have and - importantly - do not have with other people, and how these affect their lifeworlds.

The third phenomenological account of homelessness that I will examine is Davies's 2012 study of the lived experience of five homeless men and one homeless woman in London. Davies employs a qualitative approach where each participant is interviewed once in a semi-structured way for between forty-five and one hundred and twenty minutes, with an IPA methodological approach then used to analyse the resulting data. Her findings uncover three central themes: the impact of homelessness, coping with homelessness and the positive growth from being homeless. It is this last theme, positive growth as a consequence of homelessness, one that has attracted little attention in the literature, which I am keen to examine. Davies explores how several of the participants grew as people, improving their fortitude and personal positivity, all from the physical and psychological dislocation of becoming homeless. Davies does well in not painting an overly rosy picture of homelessness and reveals many of the hardships such as isolation, deprivation and identity loss. However, her findings around personal growth and well-being are insightful and provide a picture of homelessness that is not as negative as much of the literature would suggest. It is an example of positivity relating to the experience of homelessness that is at odds with much of the negative framing discussed earlier in this chapter and, as already mentioned, one that my study will further explore.

The fourth phenomenological account of homelessness that I will examine is Holt et al's (2011) study. This is a study of ten long-term (two years or more, although two participants were under this) older (50–80 years) men living in temporary hostel accommodation in the UK, focusing on how this group experiences exclusion, agency and identity. A qualitative research approach was adopted where one semi-structured interview lasting up to three and a half hours (with breaks) was conducted with each participant and analysed utilising the IPA methodology. Three themes showing how the participants dealt with "hostel" (Holt et al., 2011, p.485) accommodation were discovered, including "contingent sense of well-being in the hostel, importance of connectedness to others and balancing independence with reliance on others" (ibid). Although these themes were then broken down into sub-themes, I will examine the broad themes in terms of my study.

The desire of the participants to maintain a level of well-being is highlighted in the findings by Holt et al. and they reveal a range of factors that must be managed effectively by the participants to be successful at this. They frame this is in several ways including the notion of surviving the environment, where the participants would need to 'wise-up' and adopt behaviours that could mitigate or prevent problems

escalating with other hostel users. One of these that links back to the phenomenological studies above is the avoidance of others, particularly their peer group. In this case Holt et al. are describing a self-inflicted level of isolation, where the participants would distance themselves from others in their accommodation. This is an interesting insight into the relationships that homeless men have with others, especially in terms of the intersubjective world homeless men inhabit when living together in shared accommodation. It is a theme that my study will develop, bringing additional light to how homeless men interact within the places they share with others.

The second theme Holt et al. discuss is the importance of connectedness with others. Here they reveal how important positive social relationships with family, friends and work colleagues had been central to many of the participants, with becoming homeless typically resulting in the loss of this. They also make an important point about this theme, that losing connections with families and friends is not a cause of homelessness for the participants. This is a well-made point and one that resonates with this study, which seeks to explore the lived experience of homeless men without ascribing reasons for them becoming homeless.

Holt et al's final theme looks at the issue of independence and reliance on others. They illustrate the tension that homeless people can feel, specifically regarding maintaining personal independence and being reliant on others. They show how there was quite a degree of difference between the participants with respect to where they felt they were on this continuum, with some feeling too independent and others worried about being too reliant on others. Holt et al. relate this position to the issues of connectedness with others, showing how this intersubjective world for their participants is complex and requires serious thought and effort to navigate. It is again a point that this study will seek to expand upon and explore, alongside the wider lived world of intersubjectivity between homeless men and others.

Holt et al's study is a well presented and clear phenomenological study, providing an illuminating picture of the lived experience of older homeless men in accommodation. The issues of autonomy, reliance on others, surviving hostel life and the overall intersubjective world that they show older homeless men experiencing in sheltered accommodations offer important insights that my study will attempt to follow and then build upon, particularly how intersubjectivity overlaps the world of places they experience.

The final phenomenological account of the lived experience of homeless people examined is Petrovich and Cronley's (2015) study. They focussed on eighteen unsheltered homeless people, four women and fourteen men, in the heart of Texas, USA. A qualitative phenomenology methodology informed by Wertz's (2005) work was employed, where one 2-hour interview was conducted with each participant, which included a structural quantitative element to elicit demographic information and a semi-structured element where their experiences of being homeless were discussed. An interesting and novel element to this study was the use of a naturalistic setting for the conduct of the interviews, something that Petrovich and Cronley see as a strength of their study, although they provide little information about this. Like the other phenomenological studies discussed above, they revealed a multifaceted and diverse lifeworld of the participants, one characterised by a sense of loss and again social isolation. There are several themes in their findings that I want to briefly examine. The first is the paradoxical position that many of their participants held concerning relationships with other homeless people. Here Petrovich and Cronley show that there were some strong relationships between homeless people, which were often vital for feeling secure and safe when living on the streets. However, there was also an increased unwillingness by some of the participants to form close relationships with other homeless people, an intention driven by a lack of trust in their motives and behaviours. Here Petrovich and Cronley reveal an intersubjective world between homeless people that seems precarious and fraught, a nuanced twist on some of the studies that tackle relationships between homeless people, showing a complex phenomenon beyond simple generalisation. It adds weight to the decision for this study to further explore this aspect of the lived experience of homeless men.

The main theme examined by Petrovich and Cronley is the reluctance of the participants to utilise the support and accommodation that shelters, etc. provide. They examine how many of the participants feel about the regimes that they see these places using, describing them in terms of being like a prison. It is further damning criticism of shelters, adding evidence to the case that shelter avoidance is often a rational decision and that their greater provision may not be an answer to housing the homeless. It is a viewpoint that this study needs to consider, especially when reviewing the implications for the findings and how personal agency manifests in terms of where the homeless men choose to stay.

A final theme, one that is also common within the phenomenological studies reviewed so far, revealed by Petrovich and Cronley, was the strong sense of self-reliance that many of the participants experienced

through being homeless. Although they do not examine this in terms of personal growth, they show across their participants how their experience of being homeless has brought about a new level of resilience, independence, positivity and awareness of this change. It is an interesting finding, again showing that not everything that befalls people who become homeless is necessarily bad. It is also further evidence that the negative framing that so populates the literature does not illustrate the full picture of homelessness, and examining this will be part of the present study

The five phenomenological studies that I have identified and presented here clearly show that a phenomenological approach to studying homelessness can provide new and deeper insights into the phenomenon of homelessness. They are quite different from the general accounts of homelessness that this chapter began with, revealing a much richer tapestry of experience and have been summarised in terms of the relevance to this study in the preceding section.

2.4 Summary

This chapter reviewed some of the most relevant homeless literature for this study. initially some of the general works on homelessness were explored, illustrating the diversity of topics and some of the underlying epistemological approaches used to make sense of and bring insight to the phenomenon. One of the central issues identified in these studies was the frequent framing of homelessness as a problem in need of fixing. Undoubtedly homeless people experience a multitude of problems and it is clear in the literature that the experience can be extreme, hard and in some cases intolerable. However, as some of the social constructionist studies showed, the framing of homelessness as a problem may not be just a simple description, with broader social-political factors also having an influence. This study will be mindful of this framing of homelessness as only a problem and show that this generalisation of the negativity of homelessness may not be a full account of the lived experience of homeless people.

This chapter also examined the studies and works of non-fiction most relevant to this study. Several of the most influential biographical accounts were briefly discussed, showing two clear opposing framings of homelessness, one that romanticised the experience and a second more common one that showed

its negativity, a circumstance that only the lucky or fortunate could escape from. Although these kinds of accounts have their limitations, they do illustrate the paradox that is homelessness, and this has been important in fuelling some of the popular stereotypes that exist.

The next section reviewed ethnographies, which represent a broad body of literature sharing much in common with phenomenological studies. These provided some clear insights into the lived experience of homeless people, revealing its diversity in a high level of detail. These works also relied upon qualitative approaches for the gathering and analysis of data, providing additional validation and understanding of the methodological approach this study utilises. However, ultimately, they were not phenomenological, having objectives more aligned with putting the homeless person's experience in its wider social context than revealing the lived experience itself.

The final and most important set of literature examined were the few explicitly phenomenological studies. These were all similar in their methodologies to the one adopted in this study, although none specifically followed the approach of van Manen (1990-2014) adopted here. Several themes were highlighted across these works that have relevance for this study. The first from Watts (2012) and Lafuente and Lane (1995) brings to light the isolation and loneliness that homeless people can experience. This dislocation from the social world, coupled with the desire for companionship while also avoiding it with others is something that Holt et al. (2011) also discuss. It will be an explicit element examined in this study, with the intersubjective world of homeless men and their relationships with others, including other homeless people, explored. The findings from Holt et al. with respect to living in sheltered accommodation and from Petrovich and Cronley (2015) about the avoidance of such accommodation, will also be something examined in terms of how places are experienced by the homeless men and also how personal agency manifests here. Here the findings by Holt et al. will be considered as I look to uncover how places, such as sheltered accommodation, drop-in centres and other key places are not only experienced in themselves, but also impact upon the intersubjective and psycho-social world of the participants.

To summarise, the phenomenological works reviewed clearly illustrate the value that this type of research can bring to the understanding of homelessness and they provide a good platform for this study to build upon. They illustrate not just the depth of insight into the lived world of homeless people but

also how a qualitative approach founded in phenomenology can deliver a substantial and detailed analysis of the subject.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this chapter I examine the underpinning theoretical framework for this research, the methodology and the practices used to gather and analyse the data and report the findings, and lastly how my subjectivity influenced this research.

3.1 The Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 An Introduction to Phenomenology

> Phenomenology is a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence.
>
> Max van-Manen, 2007, p.12

This research is founded upon a phenomenological psychological methodology, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology informed by the works of van Manen (1990, 2007, 2014). To understand this and the reasons it was employed to investigate the lifeworld of homeless men, some preliminary discussion of phenomenology is required.

Phenomenology was developed in the early years of the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl and then further advanced by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and a host of other eminent twentieth century thinkers. It is a discipline that has its origins in philosophy and has been subsequently used across a variety of academic fields, including psychology. It is focussed on helping us to understand how we experience our world from a pre-reflective position, an approach that aims to uncover and shine light upon the phenomena that make up our lives. Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2010) explains this in terms of trying "to give a direct description of our experience as it is" (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.vii), perceived through Husserl's ([1936] 1970) notion of the lifeworld (lebenswelt), such that meaning is "experienced as the thing itself" (Husserl's [1936] 1970, p.39). Phenomenology aims to understand not just what constitutes our world but also how that world appears to us, revealing the significance that

things, people and experiences have for us as we turn our attention to them. It is an approach which is both radical and bold and seeks ultimately to see the world as it is rather than categorising it or reducing it to its component or objective parts. Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2010) says phenomenology "tries to translate into precise language our relationship to the world" (p.xx).

Phenomenological psychology is not a homogenous field, instead consisting of several different approaches that create a rich tapestry of opportunities for the researcher to discover a path that suits their objectives and one that matches their philosophical temperament or their "epistemological position" (Langdridge, 2007, p.4). It is an approach that can help us appreciate that people exist in their world of truth and meaning, and enquiry into this world requires an attitude and approach quite different from typical objective scientific enquiry or the mind-body dualism of Descartes (1641). When successfully employed it can provide us with a "rich description of people's experience, so that we can understand them in new, subtle and different ways and then use this new knowledge to make a difference to the lived world of ourselves and others" (Langdridge, 2007, p.9).

Phenomenological psychology typically employs a qualitative methodology in its approach to research, in sharp contrast with more dominant psychological approaches that tend to position themselves squarely with quantitative methods. These quantitative efforts commonly aim to reduce how we experience and interact with the world into their components and discover generalisations about the human condition, in contrast to phenomenology, which takes a different approach, seeing the value in understanding the human experience as it is, unadulterated, reduced or broken down into pieces. It is about "reawakening [the] basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression" (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.ix), a pre-reflective enquiry into our lives as we experience them.

3.1.2 Intentionality

An important feature of phenomenological psychology is intentionality. This word typically carries a meaning of planning or expecting to do something, whilst in phenomenology the meaning is different,

concerned instead with consciousness and how this is directed to the world. Consciousness is usually seen in terms of existing inside our head, a mental process that brings awareness to our inner state, an activity that brings understanding to our thoughts and feelings. Phenomenology rejects this claim, turning this Cartesian view of the world upside down, and seeing consciousness not as an inward-existing disposition, but instead as something "turned out to the world" (Langdridge, 2007, p.13), something that brings awareness to the objects of the world. Van Manen (2014) explains this as follows:

> Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world… Thus, all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness… Consciousness is always transitive about something. To be conscious is to be aware, in some sense, of some aspect of the world (p.94).

Phenomenology sees consciousness as something always directed towards something, where there "is always an object of consciousness" (Langdridge, 2007, p.13), and it is this that phenomenologists refer to as intentionality. This is a key feature of phenomenology and differentiates it from many other fields of study that seek to understand experience. Intentionality is seen by phenomenologists as the way we are connected to the world, arguing that rather than having a mind that is independent or separate from the world we experience - the mind body dualism of Descartes (1641) - what we "experience is the consciousness of something" (Husserl, [1931] 2004, p.119). Merleau-Ponty takes this further, stating that we should recognise "consciousness itself as a project of the world, meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses, but towards which it is perpetually directed" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xx). Intentionality is the relationship we have with our world through the direction of our consciousness towards it, summarised by Husserl when he says; "thus we fix our eyes steadily upon the sphere of Consciousness and study what it is that we find immanent in it" (Husserl, [1931] 2004, p.113).

It is something that can be further understood by two of its constituents; 'noema' and 'noesis' (Husserl, [1931] 2004), which I turn to next.

3.1.3 Noema and Noesis

Noema and noesis are concepts which clarify the focus of a phenomenological approach to psychology. Typically most of us divide the world we experience into subject and object, where the subject is the central actor who thinks, acts and deals with objects, be that people, things or relationships, that make up their world. Here phenomenologists introduce a different way of seeing the world, an approach that "seeks to transform the difference between subject and objects into a correlation between what is experienced… and the way it is experienced" (Langdridge, 2007, p.15). The former of these two being the noema and the latter the noesis. These two elements are the constituents of phenomenological intentionality, a way of seeing how consciousness manifests which is captured here diagrammatically (figure 1) by Ihde (1986).

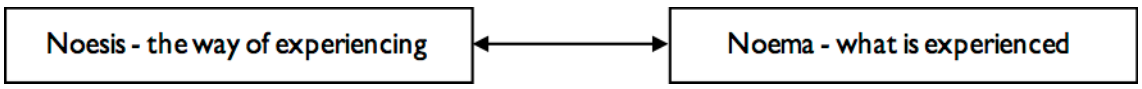

Figure 1

Another aspect to understand here is that this consciousness cannot be "described directly" (van Manen, 2014, p.95) as this would be an approach that would turn it (consciousness) into something resembling idealism. Secondly, "the world itself, without reference to an experiencing person or consciousness, cannot be described directly either" (ibid, p.95), as if it did this would be more akin to realism. Instead phenomenology seeks to understand and examine lived experience from the two poles of consciousness, noesis and noema. Ihde (1986) offers additional insight here suggesting that the noetic pole brings the 'I' clearly into the picture of phenomenology, focussing on how the world appears to people, something that is of interest to the psychologist. This is a point Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2010) makes when he suggests it "offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them" (p.vii). However, unlike other human centred psychological approaches, phenomenological psychology sees people as not necessarily occupying "the principal position in phenomenology" (Langdridge, 2007, p.16). Instead it is the experience as it appears to them that takes the central role, and which is understood as consciousness is directed towards it from a noetic position.

As phenomenology turns toward the experiences of the lived world of others we encounter the problem of our consciousness or 'natural attitude' coming between the phenomenon and our understanding, a situation that prevents us from revealing the true nature of the experience we seek to understand. Husserl ([1931] 2004) presents this problem as follows; "the natural world, the world in the ordinary sense of the word, is constantly there for me, so long as I live naturally and look in its direction" (p.104). The goal of human science, and in turn phenomenology, is "to know it (the world as it is) more comprehensively, more trustworthily, more perfectly than the naive lore of experience is able to do" (ibid, p.107) through moving beyond our natural attitude (standpoint) (ibid).

To overcome this obstacle, phenomenology employs the epoché and reduction, with the former covered in the next section.

3.1.4 Epoché or Bracketing

Epoché is an "old Greek work for abstaining judgment" (Føllesdal, 2009, p.111) and carries the sense of suspending or holding back (bracketing) a thought or belief. It is a fundamental principle of phenomenology (Hamill and Sinclair, 2010) and was the word Husserl used to describe how our natural attitude can be suspended. Husserl describes this in the following way; "phenomenological epoché… inhibits acceptance of the Objective world as existent, and thereby excludes this world completely from the field of judgment" (Husserl, [1936] 1970, p.25). He explains bracketing further when he says, "we put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being" (Husserl, [1931] 2004, p.110). It is the principle whereby the researcher sets aside their preconceptions, their "presuppositions, those preconceived ideas we might have about the things we are investigating" (Langdridge, 2007, p.17).

Husserl saw individuals as inhabiting a world that we experience and understand through what he called a 'natural attitude or standpoint' (Husserl [1931] 2004), an attitude that reflects the everydayness of our experiences, where we "are constantly evaluating our present experiences in terms of our past experiences" (Giorgi, 2009, p.91). This 'natural attitude' is a 'taken-for-granted' (van Manen, 2014)

approach to the objects and activities that surround us, where critical enquiry or the search for alternative possibilities is neither considered nor rarely contemplated. Husserl felt that this 'natural attitude' was a kind of naïve outlook, concealing the real nature of phenomena and preventing "a radically self-responsible, presuppositionless philosophy" (Crowell, 2009, p.19), such that he believed the phenomenological method required the setting aside or suspension of this 'natural attitude' via a process of reduction or bracketing, where "the researcher adopts no position on the correctness or falsity of the claims" (Ashworth, 1999, p.709). So, by bracketing our natural attitude we should be better able to adopt a phenomenological attitude and discover the essence of the phenomena being investigated. It literally becomes a "preparatory move… that involves opening up and freeing oneself from obstacles that would make it impossible to approach the phenomena of our lifeworld" (Van Manen, 2014, p.228).

From this point of setting aside our preconceptions through the application of the epoché we can embark on the next step of the phenomenological project, the reduction.

3.1.5 The Phenomenological Reduction

When considering the phenomenological reduction we are struck with not just the problem of understanding what this is, but what kind of reduction we are considering. Van Manen (2014) identifies a number of kinds of reduction, including eidetic, ontological, ethical, radical, to name but a few. However at its heart it is a concern to "describe *what* shows itself in experience or consciousness and *how* something shows itself" (Van Manen, 2014, p.229). It is a way to interrogate a phenomenon that preserves and details it for what it is rather than altering its meaning by creating hierarchies of meaning (Langdridge, 2007) or over emphasis of one point over another. The reduction instead treats the experience in its entirety, seeking to find meaning through examination and illumination of both the incredible and the mundane in the experience, focussing on what is present to consciousness, whether said or written, with the "determination to bring the world to light as it is before any falling back on ourselves has occurred, it is the ambition to make reflection emulate the unreflective life of consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.xvii). Through a process of examination, re-examination of the text or words, and comprehensive horizontalisation, the reduction enables the conscious

experience in its "full ambiguity, irreducibility, contingency, mystery, and ultimate indeterminacy" (Van Manen, 2014, p.230) to be illuminated.

We next need to examine the phenomenological methodology of van Manen (1990, 2007, 2014), an approach that informed, influenced and inspired much of how this research was conducted and its findings produced.

3.1.6 The Phenomenological Methodology of van Manen

Phenomenological research is not one single unified methodology, but a range of styles, movements, theories and practices. The researcher is faced with numerous ways in which they could conduct their investigation and represent the experience and phenomenon being studied to the reader. In this study some of the key elements of the phenomenological methodology proposed by van Manen (2014) were applied. His approach is most akin to what is often termed hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, although from the outset it should be pointed out that van Manen sees phenomenology as always "descriptive and hermeneutic" (van Manen, 2014, p.26): "it is descriptive… because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic)… because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. This implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledged that the (phenomenological) "facts" of lived experience are always meaningfully (hermeneutical) experienced" (van Manen, 1990, p.180-181). With this in mind I will focus on what van Manen has written most about - hermeneutic phenomenology. It is an approach to phenomenology that is well suited to the goals of this study and informed its approach whilst I have not been bound to every detail of his methodology.

In his 1990 book van Manen sets out a clear structure for conducting phenomenological research. However, although this text certainly contains much that is at the centre of van Manen's phenomenological thinking, he has significantly developed upon it in his more recent work '*The Phenomenology of Practice*' (2014). Van Manen suggests himself that he has moved forward in thinking and explanation since 1990, and although not wanting to distance himself from his early work, he sees this

as a better summary of his thinking about phenomenology and its practice. Therefore, it is this latter text that I have used predominantly to inform this study, as summarised herein.

The methodology explicated by van Manen (2014) is predominantly a hermeneutic one, an approach that helps us interpret the lived experience of the individual through the words and stories they tell. He says, "phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be essentially interpretive and primarily oriented to the explication of texts" (van Manen, 2014, p.132). It is something for van Manen that is driven by a sense of wonder and abstinence from "theoretical, polemical, suppositional and emotional intoxication" (ibid, p.26). This mood of wonder is central to van Manen's approach and was an aspect that came to heavily influence this research. Here he uses wonder in its broadest sense - to be astonished but also to be curious. It is a notion residing in the phenomenological reduction, enabled through a strong horizontalisation, which "literally take[s] the reader or listener into a wondrous landscape, invoking a feeling of disorientation, causing confusion that tends to accompany the experience of strangeness, of being struck with wonder" (ibid, p.359). Van Manen suggests it is the central methodological feature of (hermeneutic) phenomenology and requires the researcher to not only hold that feeling but to evoke it within the reader as well.

This sense of wonder is further explicated through the use of phenomenological questioning. Here van Manen suggests that as we examine and describe the lived experience of others we are forced to reflect upon its nature, a step with the potential to create wonder, which should then lead or encourage us to ask ourselves phenomenological questions, such as "what is that experience like?", "what is the phenomenological meaning of that experience?", "how is that experience felt by the individual?" (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, wonder gives way to, and is also furthered by, the questions we ask ourselves about the lived experience as we reflect upon it.

Another key element of van Manen's methodological practice is the focus on lived experience, or life as we live it. It is a concept that I briefly discussed in the introduction to this chapter and, for van Manen, something central to not only phenomenology but much of modern human science, reverberating across a multitude of research methodologies. It is through Husserl ([1936] 1970) that this notion of the lifeworld was developed, first being mentioned in 'The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology' (Husserl, [1936] 1970), where he develops an elaborate and sophisticated description

of what it means and how it can be applied to the field of human understanding. It is for him at the heart of human knowledge, and he states, "for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the "ground" of all praxis" (Husserl, [1936] 1970. p.50), going on to say that it is "the world of straightforward intersubjective experiences" (ibid, p.43). Subsequent phenomenologists have continued to develop and evolve the concept of the lifeworld, with Gadamer ([1975] 2012) bringing a hermeneutic twist to it, seeing the lifeworld as something always situated in discourse, saying, "the world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world. But this world is verbal in nature" (with Gadamer, [1975] 2012, p.440). Van Manen (2014) sees it as the job of the researcher to illuminate this lived experience, to peel away its layers so that the experience can be exposed, while avoiding the risk of turning this into an object of study in and of itself, an objectification that can strip away the meaning, subtleties and nuance of the lived experience. To help achieve this van Manen emphasises again the utilisation of epoché and reduction, also suggesting that this lived experience needs to be explored across the whole range of modalities (van Manen, 1990). This is not something unique to van Manen, being described in profound terms by such eminent phenomenologists as Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2010) through his work on embodiment and perception, something he describes as follows:

> Our own body is in the world as a heart is in the organism: it keeps a visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and a sustained it inwardly, and with it forms a system (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.235).

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a deep and sophisticated endeavour, wherein he argues that it is through "the mediation of [our] bodily experience" (Merleau-Ponty, [1962] 2010, p.235) that we gain a "comprehensive perspective" (Ibid) of the world we inhabit. He argues that "the world (we inhabit), are given to me along with parts of my body" (Ibid, p.237). Our lifeworld is, therefore, a product of the relationship between our bodies and the world we inhabit. Van Manen (2014) suggests that Merleau-Ponty "demonstrates how lived experience needs to be interrogated by adopting an expressive vocative style in his ontological phenomenology of embodiment" (Van Manen, 2014, p.131), or a creative and embodied way to understand and reveal the lived world of others. Next, I turn to how this embodiment is incorporated within van Manen's method.

Van Manen highlights four clear modalities or existentials where lived experience can be described and, critically for his hermeneutic method, interpreted: relationality, or the lived self-other; corporeality, or the lived body; spatiality, or lived time; and lastly temporality, or lived time. Van Manen, in his 2014 work, also suggests a fifth modality – materiality, or lived things - but this was not utilised in this research for reasons of expediency rather than importance. This enquiry into the lifeworld of others through existential understanding has its roots in the work of Heidegger ([1927] 2010) and several writers including Sartre ([1943] 2003), De Beauvoir ([1949] 1997) and, as the paragraph above shows, Merleau-Ponty ([1962] 2010). Van Manen sees the existentials, and specifically their translation into modes of enquiry, as "helpful universal themes to explore meaning aspects of our lifeworld" (van Manen, 2014, p.303). They provide the opportunity to interrogate, unravel and reveal the lived experience from distinct angles or perspectives that can bring additional clarity and understanding to how the phenomenon manifests. They provide a framework that enables the researcher to tackle the complexity of describing and interpreting the multi-layered intricacies of lived experience, and this was something heavily relied upon in this research.

Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology is a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to phenomenology, informing this study by providing a deep and thorough underpinning for both methods of data collection and subsequent interpretation. It provided the opportunity to discover both wonder and an understanding that was sensitive of the lived experiences of the participants. Its constant demand to practice epoché and reduction provided space for lived experiences to be revealed. And finally, its emphasis on the process of phenomenological writing and its requirement for continuous reflection upon the words, texts and paragraphs of the data, provided the means to make even the mundane experiences of the participants evocative and clear.

Next, I turn to the methodological framework for this study, where I will also return to van Manen and his suggestions for good phenomenological analysis of interview data.

3.2 The Methodological Framework

3.2.1 Phenomenological Research

Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic psychological approach is a qualitative research methodology driven by an epistemological belief in the value of first-hand accounts of lived experience, rather than one looking for objective measurable data. A potential challenge in using van Manen's approach, one centred heavily on the subjective experience of the participants, is the question of its validity and reliability. For quantitative research demonstrating this is much easier as criteria are well established, however for the qualitative methods being applied in this study, the situation is much less clear and more problematic as the "conventions and standards for the conduct and evaluation of [qualitative] research… are difficult to define… [and that] no hierarchy of widely acknowledged expertise yet exists" (Yardley, 2000, p.216).

With phenomenological research the situation is further complicated due to the philosophical position adopted towards the nature of experience and its rejection of the subject object dichotomy typically employed in quantitative and much qualitative research. This is something that Giorgi (1998) tackles, setting out a compelling argument that suggests that phenomenology deals with the empirical-logical world differently from the typical standpoint, he says:

> When I work within a phenomenological framework, I find that the necessity for dealing with validity and reliability as I understand them in their indigenous context, is not compelling in the same way. There is something about the mode of functioning of the phenomenologist that makes these concerns seem more remote than proximate (p.169).

Giorgi goes on to argue that phenomenology should be concerned with "the issue of the proper evidence for making knowledge claims" (ibid), rather than seeking validity and reliability, and that undertaking and staying true to the explicit methods and philosophical traditions of Husserlian phenomenology will provide this 'proper evidence.'

Van Manen continues this theme and warns that phenomenological qualitative research "is not well-served by validation schemes that are naively applied" (van Manen, 2014, p.347). He sees phenomenology as unique amongst the myriad of methods that study lived experience, in that it is an approach that seeks to describe the 'existential' rather than 'factual' empirical (ibid) nature of the phenomenon. Therefore methods that might typically be used to measure validity may be inappropriate for judging phenomenological research, and instead "the validity of a phenomenological study has to be sought in the appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive process demonstrated in the study" (van Manen, 2014, p.348). Van Manen is therefore suggesting that validity in the case of phenomenological studies should be founded upon the quality of the research and how well the phenomenological methods are employed, particularly the interpretive process and the "depthful insights gained though the study" (ibid, p.355). Fortunately, van Manen does not leave us there and provides some help in evaluating the quality of phenomenological research with the following seven questions;

- Heuristic questioning - inducing a sense of contemplative wonder.
- Descriptive richness - containing rich and recognizable material.
- Interpretive depth - reflective insight beyond the typical everyday understanding.
- Distinctive rigor - self-critical questioning of the meaning of the phenomenon.
- Strong and addressive meaning - the text speaking to our sense of embodied meaning.
- Experiential awakening - the text awakening pre-reflective experience through evocative language.
- Inceptual epiphany - does the text offer deeper and original insight? (van Manen, 2014, p.355-356)

The intention, therefore, of this phenomenological study has been to produce a study that is qualitative, utilising first-hand naïve descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. The validity of this study is then to be evaluated against its phenomenological quality as set out by the seven principals above and the correct application of the phenomenological methods, such as epoché and reduction discussed previously.

3.2.2 Geographical Selection

Selecting places within which to conduct this research was an important step in this study and required careful consideration to ensure that I would be able to locate a population of homeless people that I was able to recruit. Homeless centres, hostels and drop-in centres were the obvious choice as they would have populations that were self-defining in terms of being homeless and would have a high proportion of men. Several locations in the West Midlands, UK, including homeless centres, hostels and drop-in centres were reviewed until two of the most suitable (one homeless hostel and one drop-in centre) were located and permission from the mangers of these places secured for the research to be conducted on their premises. The homeless hostel had been running for over 40 years, although it has gone through both location and management changes, and now offers semi-permanent accommodation (time limited to 18 months) for up to 35 men who are homeless. The drop-in centre was started 15 years ago, and is a weekday only location providing free access to vulnerably housed or homeless individuals who want somewhere to shower, eat breakfast and lunch, and receive support for their health, mental, and physical needs.

I felt that the people using the chosen facilities would fit into my definition of homelessness, as either presently experiencing a level of instability in their accommodation or having had experience of such issues. They, by their very nature as users of such places, would be experiencing some level of homelessness. This was proven to be the case as I recruited participants, where even those who had more permanent accommodation (see table 2) still felt a high degree of instability and/or insecurity with where they stayed.

One aspect of the choice of locations that needs mentioning here was the issue of safety and privacy. The interviews needed to be conducted in privacy to ensure that the participants felt comfortable to share their stories and avoid disclosing private information to their peer group or others who might use it against them. However, the dilemma with having private interviews is the potential danger it can pose to either researcher or participants, where opportunity for help if conversations turn sour or issues arise can be hard to access. Fortunately, both selected locations provided places where the interviews could be undertaken in private but were also only a few metres away from staff and other participants, providing a level of security and safety. A final benefit of the locations chosen was the familiarity that

many of the participants had with the places, meaning that they were immediately comfortable and at ease within the environment.

3.2.3 Piloting

Before starting the interviews proper time was allocated to piloting the intended approach with other 'clients' (a term used by the drop-in centre for people who accessed the service). The purpose of this was to get some feedback as to how participants might react to the kind of interview questions I was planning, to gain some insight into the world of homelessness and importantly to become comfortable interviewing a population that I had very little experience interacting with.

Individuals were approached at the drop-in centre and asked if they would be willing to help me with my study and undertake a short interview where I would share the kind of interview questions I intended to use. When an individual agreed to participate, a quiet public area of the drop-in centre was chosen, where we sat down and the following steps took place:

- I introduced myself and explained the kind of study I was intending
- I explained that I wanted to make the study successful and was keen to receive some feedback from individuals that were either familiar with, had or were presently experiencing homelessness
- I explained that the interview would not be recorded and their feedback would only be used to inform my study and would not be used directly
- I explained that I would make notes
- Finally, I explained that they could terminate the interview at any time and any data already collected would not be used.

Over about one month seven individuals agreed to participate in the interviews. After the introductory steps above were undertaken some of the questions from the phenomenological interview question schedule (table 1) were discussed and feedback asked for.

Table 1 - Phenomenological Interview Questions Schedule

Interview One	· Tell me about a typical day or week for you. · What kind of things do you get up to? · What sort of things keep you busy? · Tell me about how you ended up here. · What kind of things do you look forward to?
Interview Two	· What things do you look forward to during your week or day? · Tell me about the activities or hobbies you participate in. · How did you get involved in them? · How do you see them progressing? · Is there anything else you would like to be doing?
Interview Three	· Do you have any friends or people you feel close to? · Tell me about that relationship. · How would you describe that relationship? · Tell me about some of the key relationships you have had in the past. · Are there other relationships you have or would like to have?
Interview Four	· What are the main challenges you face now? · Tell me about them and how you deal with them. · Are there other challenges or problems you encounter that you can share? · What aspects of your life do you most dislike or would like to change?
Interview Five	· Tell me about where you live or stay. · Tell me about some of the other places you spend your time. · Are there places you like or would like to go to? · What do you think of this city? · What do you think of this place?
Interview Six	· Tell me about what home means for you. · Do you feel this is a home for you or do you feel you have a home? · What was your home like for you growing up? · Would you like to live somewhere else? · Tell me more about this.

Each interview in the pilot phase lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes (see appendix section I for the schedule, participant details and feedback from the pilot participants). Following the end of this pilot phase I analysed my notes and drew the following conclusions:

1. Getting the agreement of a participant to participate in the pilot research was not straightforward. Several individuals refused and most were initially quite wary or reluctant to agree. Initially I had intended to use one of the private meeting rooms, but this seemed to increase their reluctance and therefore I conducted the interviews in the public area of the drop-in centre.

2. This part of the piloting highlighted issues with the kinds of questions I intend to use and how I should do it. The intention was to use some of the questions from the phenomenological questions (table 1) in a straightforward and matter of fact way, to generate feedback and a discussion about how appropriate they would be. However, it soon became apparent as the piloting progressed that this approach was not useful. Specifically, it was difficult to ask in a natural and conversational manner these questions in a way that enabled easy and frank conversation. It was too direct and made any kind of conversation awkward and stilted. I, therefore, switched quickly to having a much more general and relaxed conversation, where I would discuss my study and some of the hesitations I felt. This would lead to the participant offering me advice and tips about how to proceed. As conversation flowed I was able to begin to ask one or two of the specific prepared phenomenological questions above and to ask their opinion of them.

   This was an important learning point for my study and showed that I had to be much more circumspect, less direct and more conversational in my approach when interviewing and before asking any meaningful, personal or probing question.

3. Another important learning point from this piloting was the feedback concerning trust. Here several piloting participants told me that it would be important to establish trust with the intended participants if I wanted to hear their real stories. They felt that I would need to work hard to achieve this and it was something that I took on board.

4. A point to make here, something that contradicts somewhat the previous point, was that several of the participants moved from just providing feedback to answering the questions as if directed at them. Although this was not the purpose of the piloting and the data was not used it is

illustrative of another point that I needed to bear in mind, that the potential participants were not a homogenous group, where conclusions could be drawn purely based on their circumstances. I realised that I would need to be mindful of my own bias and stereotyping, and the risk of failing to adopt a proper phenomenological attitude.

5. A final learning point gleaned from the participants was one specific piece of feedback from a man who reminded me that I needed to ensure I gave enough time for them to answer a question. They felt that I may have an agenda and schedule, that I should take my time, not force answers and allow the potential participants enough space and time to answer. It was an interesting temporal point, showing me that time for me may not be felt in quite the same way as those that I intended to interview. It further confirmed to me that taking my time over my study and adopting an extended multi-interview approach would be the best way to ensure success in the data collection stage of my study.

The piloting stage of this study provided some really useful feedback and suggestions with respect to how I could conduct the interviews, also providing me with the confidence that I would be able to engage professionally and with proper consideration for the participants.

3.2.4 Taking a Multi-Interview Approach

For this research study a multi-interview approach was chosen, whereby nine homeless men were interviewed up to six times (one was interviewed seven times) over 18 months (see table 4). There were several reasons for this decision, both theoretical and practical, which are discussed in the following section.

One of the main reasons for taking this approach of multiple interviews was the opportunity it provided to get to understand the participants' experiences. One of the issues with single interview methods is that they risk capturing only some or a partial amount of the experience, whilst taking a multiple

interview approach "can build deeper and more trusting relationships with participants and plumb their lives and experiences extensively over time" (Read, 2018, p. 3).

A second reason for selecting this approach was the desire to build a strong rapport with the participants, in order to enable frank and detailed discussion about their experiences. The concern I had, given their situation and experience, was that they may be suspicious of (perceived) authority or at least reluctant to engage openly with it (see Chapter 1, section 1.3). Therefore, I adopted an approach that would be slow and careful, where I would earn their trust over time, and where their stories might be shared with me freely and without restraint over an extended period.

A third reason for deciding on an extended multi-interview approach was the opportunity it provided me to develop skills in interviewing in a phenomenological manner. This element cannot be overstressed as the overall quality of this study rested upon gathering data that would adhere to the principles outlined by van Manen above and therefore undertaking this over an extended period would not only provide practice, but sufficient opportunity to reflect upon the data and improve its quality.

A final reason for this decision was the opportunity to immerse myself in the environments of the participants. This was not in order to do a full ethnographic study, but I felt it would enable me to come closer to understanding the world of the participants better and would, therefore, help in both interviewing and eventually interpreting their lived experiences.

There are also several disadvantages with this extended multi-interview approach, for example, Farrall states that it "is incredibly time (and resource) intensive" (2006, p.4). There is also the issue of maintaining relationships, which was at times particularly exasperating in this case, as homeless participants can be transitory and somewhat circumspect. Wasserman and Clair, in their 2010 study, found that the homeless population could be "both stable and ever changing" (Wasserman and Clair, 2010, p.38). They, like other researchers in this field, also had to work at maintaining and developing relationships with their participants over an extended time, and point out that the process is a "joint accomplishment by [and between] the participants" (ibid, p.28), where strong trust and rapport needs to be built.

A second issue with the approach selected was the risk of becoming unfocused or ad hoc, where the interviews do not advance or deliver additional meaning over time. To avoid this a phenomenological interview question schedule (see table 1 above) and approach to interviewing were put in place, one that could be flexible and adapted but that would also help to ensure that conducting the interviews over this extended period would bring value worthy of the effort required to achieve them.

3.2.5 Interview Structure and Preparation

The purpose of conducting interviews for a phenomenological study is to gather "pre-reflective experiential accounts… [and to] explore examples and varieties of lived experiences, especially in the form of anecdotes, narratives, stories, and other lived experience accounts" (van Manen, 2014, p.311-313), while maintaining a phenomenological attitude. Van Manen provides two key suggestions for achieving this; the first is to "keep the phenomenological intent of the interview clearly in mind" (2014, p.316) and secondly to obtain concrete stories of particular situations or events" (ibid, p.317). To achieve this and ensure that the overall data gathering phase of this research study remained focussed six overall themes (see table 2 below) were developed that could be used alongside the phenomenological interview schedule (table 1). Secondly, a preparation process was developed to be used before each interview. The six themes for the interviews were as follows:

Table 2

· Session one - focus on the daily life and key activities of the participants
· Session two - explore the activities in detail
· Session three - explore the key relationships with others
· Session four - focus on the challenges they face
· Session five - explore the relationships with places
· Session six - discuss the relationship with home and close the study

A point to mention here is that although these themes were a guide to the interviews the intention was not to stick rigidly to them if other subjects and insightful conversations developed during the interview. Instead, they were a direction of travel, something to help shape and keep the study focussed.

The second element to the interviewing framework was the development of a preparation process that was used before every interview, detailed as follows:

- Before each interview journal notes of the previous interviews to be reviewed and salient points or additional questions to be prepared for asking or raising with the participant
- As much agency as possible to be given to the participant at the beginning of every interview, including asking them how much time they could spare and the kinds of subjects they might want to discuss
- Phenomenological interview question schedule questions (see table 1 above) to be prepared
- Each participant to be informed of the kind of topic/theme that I would like to cover during the interview (dependent on whether they had some other topic they wished to discuss) and asked if that would be okay
- Participants to be asked if they would be happy to undertake additional interviews at the end of each session (until the final sixth interview)
- Each participant to be paid (see later) at the end of each interview.

This preparation also provided a good opportunity to reflect on the purpose of each interview, as well as to remember the collaborative nature of the exercise, something van Manen stresses. Here he suggests that we are literally borrowing the stories of others and so require an approach where they are encouraged at every step to share and detail their narratives. This was achieved in this research through being mindful to not only ask good phenomenological questions but to provide the space for their answer to develop so that they could fully reveal themselves.

A final important element of the interview framework was to adopt a semi-structured interview style, where the open-ended phenomenological questions were used (see table 1 below), allowing for additional questions to arise and a more fluid conversation to develop. It is an approach that is popular within qualitative research as it provides enough structure to keep the interviews focussed on the

phenomenon being studied, while being flexible enough to allow new questions and insights to develop over the course of the conversations. The details of the interview schedule are discussed later in this section.

3.2.6 Recruitment of Participants

Recruiting participants was a critical element of this study, requiring considerable effort and planning, made more difficult due to the possibility that some of the potential participants may be vulnerable or, as mentioned previously, wary of authority. These concerns and my overall unfamiliarity with this population required me to undertake a number of specific steps to be able to recruit the participants. This included me situating myself regularly at the drop-in centre, where I would spend a few hours a week talking to the clients there. My intention was not just to learn how best to talk and approach the people there, but also to develop a level of confidence and ease in doing so. Although this was something initially intended to help me recruit participants, it continued after the participants were recruited and meant I would often spend as much time simply talking to people and spending time at the drop-in centre as I did conducting formal interviews.

To recruit participants I employed the following recruitment process (see table 3 below):

Table 3

Step 1. Deliver several short introductory presentations to the managers and staff at the locations about the nature of the study and ask for help in identifying potential participants.
Step 2. Introduce the study and myself to the identified or other potential participants, providing an opportunity for them to ask questions and learn more about the purpose of the study. To aid this a short script of the study was written (included in the consent form - see appendix section 2), read aloud (in case of literacy difficulties), and copies given.
Step 3. Once a participant agreed to participate a consent form (see appendix section 2) was explained to the participant, signed and a copy given to each person.

3.2.7 Participants

Nine homeless men participated in this study and some of their biographical details are included in the following section (see table 4 below). To protect their identity, their names have been changed and other distinguishing biographical features changed or omitted.

Table 4 - Participant Information

No	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Housing Situation	Background
1	Frank	Late 50s	White British	Living in a homeless hostel	He had been homeless for an indeterminate number of years after the death of his parents and the loss of their home through unclear circumstances. He had been living in a hostel for at least three years when he became a participant in this study
2	Colin	Late 40s	White British	Living in a council flat	He had been unemployed for nearly 20 years and during that time he had experienced various levels of homelessness, including hostel accommodation life. He was presently living in a flat provided by the local authorities. He was also the only person who had been orphaned at an early age, spending his childhood in children's homes. He was a self-proclaimed recovering alcoholic, who also had several physical issues including severe arthritis in his and feet joints.
3	James	Late 40s	White British	Living in homeless hostels - moved several times during the course of the study	He had been homeless and unemployed for an indeterminate number of years. He had also spent several years in prison, including the first time as a young offender when he was much younger. He was a self-proclaimed recovering drug addict, where he had been a regular user of sniffing butane gas. He was living in hostel accommodation during the interviews, although he also spent a period of hospitalisation after been found unconscious in the street with a severe life-threatening neck wound one morning.

4	Brian	Late 40s	White British	Living in house for homeless people supplied by council	He had experienced homelessness several times in his past, usually after marriage or relationship breakdowns. He was living in a council provided flat during this study. He was also the only participant who was intermittently attending college, where he was studying to learn a building trade.
5	Mervin	Mid 20s	Black British	Living in a homeless hostel	It was not clear the precise time he had become homeless, but this appeared to be within the last few years following becoming unemployed. He was presently living in a hostel and admitted to having some problems with drugs, although he never discussed this in terms of addiction.
6	Jonathan	Late 50s	White British	Living in a council flat	He had experienced over 20 years of unemployment and homelessness, including living in hostel accommodation and council provided flats. During his participation in this study he was living alone in a council flat close to where his elderly mother lived. He discussed openly during the interviews suffering from depression. Partway through this study, he also shared that he had recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness.
7	Tony	Late 60s	White British	Rough sleeping	He had been homeless for an indeterminate number of years after serving a period in prison. He had lived in hostel accommodation but was presently rough sleeping, which he had been doing for over three years. His health was severely affected during the period I interviewed him after being set on

					fire, where he suffered serious burns resulting in a long period of hospitalisation.
8	Ryan	Mid 50s	White British	Living in house for homeless people supplied by council	He had spent most of his adult life experiencing levels of homelessness, where he had lived rough, in hostels and private accommodation. During this study, he was living in a shared property provided by the council for men who were homeless. He discussed openly through the course of the study the problems he faced with gambling, which he felt had been a contributory factor to his life circumstances.
9	Bill	Mid 50s	White British	Recently moved out of a homeless hostel into a flat for one run by the homeless hostel	He had only recently become homeless at the start of this study, including a short period of living rough, followed by a period in a hostel before finally getting a small apartment provided by a charity. He admitted to having been a heavy drinker but had given up alcohol after becoming homeless

3.2.8 Interviewing for the Study

Interviewing the participants was a major part of this study and required not just planning and organisation but also a serious commitment to the phenomenological attitude discussed above. In total 40 interviews with 9 participants were conducted starting from 5th February 2015 and finishing on 15th September 2016 (see table 5 below). The number of interviews varied from two to seven, with the intention being to conduct six with each participant (see table 6 below). Several of the participants stopped attending the drop-in centre during the course of the study or disappeared and so it was not possible to conduct six interviews with them. One participant undertook seven interviews.

Table 5 - Interview Schedule

	Interview Number	Date	Name	Venue	Interview Length in Minutes	Intended Focus for Interview
1	1	02/10/2015	Colin	Drop-in Centre	52	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	20/11/2015		Drop-in Centre	41	Detailed review of daily life
	3	24/03/2016		Drop-in Centre	50	Key relationships with others
	4	19/05/2016		Drop-in Centre	32	The challenges faced
	5	12/07/2016		Drop-in Centre	55	Relationships with places
2	1	05/06/2015	Brian	Drop-in Centre	59	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	02/10/2015		Drop-in Centre	30	Detailed review of daily life
	3	22/01/2016		Drop-in Centre	38	Key relationships with others
	4	20/04/2016		Drop-in Centre	40	The challenges faced
	5	17/06/2016		Drop-in Centre	34	Relationships with places
	6	11/07/2016		Drop-in Centre	25	Relationship with home
	7	12/08/2016		Drop-in Centre	31	Additional discussion about life
3	1	28/09/2015	Jonathan	Drop-in Centre	36	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	22/01/2016		Drop-in Centre	46	Detailed review of daily life
	3	01/04/2016		Drop-in Centre	41	Key relationships with others
	4	11/07/2007		Drop-in Centre	27	The challenges faced
	5	15/09/2017		Drop-in Centre	35	Relationships with places
4	1	22/05/2015	Ryan	Drop-in Centre	70	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	02/10/2015		Drop-in Centre	41	Detailed review of daily life
	3	01/04/2016		Drop-in Centre	21	Key relationships with others
	4	10/05/2016		Drop-in Centre	27	The challenges faced
	5	10/06/2016		Drop-in Centre	28	Relationships with places

5	1	09/10/2015	Mervin	Hostel	32	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	18/12/2015		Hostel	33	Detailed review of daily life
6	1	16/10/2015	Bill	Hostel	62	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	06/12/2015		Hostel	57	Detailed review of daily life
	3	17/02/2016		Hostel	48	Key relationships with others
	4	20/04/2016		Hostel	28	The challenges faced
	5	11/07/2016		Drop-in Centre	32	Relationships with places
	6	17/08/2016		Drop-in Centre	30	Relationship with home
7	1	28/05/2015	James	Hostel	93	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	10/05/2016		Hostel	26	Detailed review of daily life
	3	10/06/2016		Drop-in Centre	32	The challenges faced
8	1	26/02/2016	Tony	Drop-in Centre	55	Daily life and key activities of the participants (including biographical details)
	2	17/06/2016		Drop-in Centre	24	Detail review of daily life
9	1	26/02/2016	Frank	Drop-in Centre	38	Daily life and key activities (including biographical details)
	2	20/04/2016		Drop-in Centre	29	Detailed review of daily life
	3	10/06/2016		Drop-in Centre	23	The challenges faced
	4	12/07/2016		Drop-in Centre	26	Relationships with places
	5	12/08/2016		Drop-in Centre	26	Relationship with home

Table 6 - Number of interviews

Participant Name	**Number of Interviews**
Colin	5
Brian	7
Jonathan	5
Ryan	5
Mervin	2
Bill	6
James	3
Tony	2
Frank	5
Total	**40**

There were also other issues that needed to be managed, the first of which was the recording of the conversations, as well as the observation of the body during the interviews, maintaining momentum through the individual interviews and across the extended interview schedule, not leading the participants, and finally closing the process in a way that was sensitive to the participants and the relationship we had established. These elements are discussed in the following section.

All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and digitally recorded. On average each interview took thirty minutes, however some were as long as an hour and some only twenty minutes (see table 5 above). Notes in my journal were made during and especially after each interview when I had more time. This was always undertaken in long hand, and included three elements as follows:

- Data about the day, such as time, date location, participant name, weather
- My observations about the participant, such as how they behaved, what they were wearing, their general level of well-being (as much as could be observed) and anything else that stood out for me
- My thoughts and reflections about the experience, such as whether I was emotionally moved, felt sadness, confused or anything else that I thought may be useful when I came to reflect upon the interviews later in the study

The third element of the interview phase was the need to maintain momentum as there was a risk that the interviews could become boring or unenjoyable to the participants, leading to them quitting the study. This meant that each interview needed to not just remain focussed on the overall aims of the research project but also had to encourage the participants to talk about their lived experience and then return later to do this again. This was particularly critical for several participants who either disappeared or stopped coming to the drop-in centre for months at a time (see table 5 for dates of interviews above). The phenomenological question interview schedule provided an opportunity to keep the interviews moving forward if the conversation ran dry, however, a much more important point was the level of care and attention given to the participant and their stories. They had to feel that their stories were of significance and interest, which required more than simple attention from me, needing effort and energy, and for me to be alive to the conversation, ready to respond and also sensitive to providing the participant space to think and contemplate.

Another key methodological issue when interviewing the participants was to ensure that I did not lead the participants or unduly influence the telling of their experience. Mook (2009) suggests that a vital aspect of Van den Berg's metabletic (1961) approach to phenomenology is the principle of non-disturbance, which emphasises the necessity of leaving "the phenomenon intact as it manifests itself in a particular time and place in history and within a certain context. The phenomenon should not be disturbed or distorted and no detail should be isolated or eliminated" (Mook, 2009, p.29). Although this was a point primarily aimed at historical phenomenological research it was something that was considered during the interviews, capturing well the intention to let the participants tell their stories in their own way, keeping my interference to a minimum and thereby also avoiding my leading them.

A final element of consideration was the management of the ending or closure of interviews. Although four of the participants did not complete all six interviews the remainder did and during the 18-month period a positive relationship had been developed. A point Neale (2013) picks up when he suggests that the "elongated time frames for empirical research create long term reciprocal research relationships that need careful consideration and nurturing over time" (p.1). These close relationships made ending some of the interviews hard, and this was something which required managing by ensuring that relationships did not become too close over the 18 months and that the schedule for ending of the interviews was clearly communicated to each participant in advance.

Before closing this section there was one other element of the interviews that requires mentioning and this was the payment of the participants for each interview they attended. The ethics of this are discussed later, with the process described here. Permission to pay the participants was sought from the managers of both locations where the research took place. They agreed to this under the proviso that the payment would be some kind of food voucher that could not be used to buy alcohol. This was done and each participant was paid at the end of each interview a £5.00 voucher for a popular supermarket.

3.2.9 Data Analysis

In this study I undertook thematic analysis informed by van Manen's (1990, 2014) hermeneutic phenomenology, an approach designed to help untangle the lived experiences that are being described and to bring to light hitherto buried patterns of meaning. Van Manen's approach aims at showing how "the lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way" (van Manen,1990, p.39).

For van Manen this is a "complex and creative process" (van Manen, 2014, p.320), and, unlike other kinds of thematic analysis, it is not "a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning that is driven by the epoché and reduction" (ibid). To undertake his thematic analysis first requires an understanding of what for him constitutes a theme, something he begins to explain in the following:

> Phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations: metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes (van Manen, 1990, p.79).

He offers an additional explanation of what a theme is, suggesting that it is the "experience of focus" (ibid p.87) that brings light to the phenomenon, it is "the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand" (ibid). Through this explanation van Manen is echoing a point captured across thematic analysis in phenomenology, that is to make sense of the life world of others by identifying patterns of meaning in the text, sentences or other datasets. To uncover phenomenological themes he offers a

systematic and methodical approach that starts with a wholistic or sententious (Van Manen, 2014) approach, by which he means the search for a theme begins at the broadest level, treating the text as a whole (ibid, p.320).

This process started in this study with isolating individual thematic statements through a wholistic or sententious approach (Van Manen, 2014). This was undertaken through several readings of the texts, a process that initially was aimed at gaining a comprehensive and clear familiarisation with the texts. Once I felt I had this I then turned my attention to the identification of meaningful or significant thematic expressions of the lived experience of the participants in the text. Here I was looking for those phrases that were significant or reflective of the text as a whole. Van Manen suggests this is always a judgment call and requires deliberation, thought and care. To achieve this selection required me to:

- Read, consider and read again until the structure of what was being said revealed itself
- Maintain the phenomenological attitude, where I would be able to bracket my subjectivity
- Adopt an attitude of horizontalisation, where no potential theme was given priority over another.

As the significant thematic expressions of the lived experience of the participants were located they were highlighted in the text and a thematic statement or heading was created to represent it (see table 7 below).

Table 7

Example of the identification of one of the essential themes in an interview

Holistic Reading Approach

> Because every now and then I'll keep telling them. I'll say, look, if it wasn't for you, and the rest of the people at the charity, I would not be out of ... Brought out the creativity that's like locked up inside of me. You have drawn that out of me, and not just saying, uh, like, you played this, this way. You draw this, this way. You, you like encouraging me, gentle, extremely gentle persuasion to get it done. And you show us exactly how to do something.

Theme

Enabled Personal Growth by Others

After several iterations of this process I was ready to move onto the next stage of van Manen's thematic analysis, a process he calls the selective or highlighting approach. Here individual sentences were reviewed to see if they also expressed or represented 'significant thematic expressions of the lived expressions of the participants' (van Manen, 2014). This was a process of re-reading the text and finding sentences and paragraphs that were evocative or insightful, asking myself if there is something here that "seems particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience" (van Manen, 1990, p.93). These were also highlighted in the text and thematic or reflective descriptive-interpretative sentences were created (ibid) (see table 8 below).

Table 8

Example of the revealing of one of the essential themes in an interview

Selective Reading Approach

And now I'm, reassuring myself, that I can do it and all those voices from my, um, my past, don't mean anything anymore.

Thematic Expression

I can move on from my past and feel better about myself.

Van Manen provides a further mechanism for identifying themes - a detailed or line-by-line approach. This is where a sentence or sentence clusters are reviewed. This step was not undertaken, and instead I took a step outside van Manen's method and transferred all my notes/paraphrases or words from the margins of the text - from both the wholistic and selective reading approaches - onto a large A2 sheet of paper in the form of a mind-map (see appendix 6). This was a variation on the traditional approach to thematic analysis, something I decided to use due to the sheer volume of data, themes and thematic expressions that I had uncovered, and as a way to undertake interrogation of the themes and associated notes. Mind-maps are visual representations of data, where words and images are connected to other words or images with which they share a level of commonality. To create the mind maps I started from the centre of the paper and entered the name of a participant, then I entered onto the mind-map my notes/paraphrases or key words of the themes that I had highlighted in the margins of my text. This began simply enough with no planning or premeditation, however it soon became apparent that many of these notes were related or shared some commonality. This commonality was picked up upon and enabled me to geospatially organise my mind-map, by which I mean I was able to group related themes and their notes from the different interviews with the same participant together onto one mind-map page. Doing this meant that slowly a picture or mosaic began to form, with areas of the mind-map becoming steadily more populated with similar or related notes, phrases and keywords from the transcripts. A holistic picture of the themes began to emerge as a visual map of the lifeworlds of the participants. At this point I was able to label the clusters of related information with a title or heading, such as work, relationships, friendship, etc. Following completion of this step I circled in the same colour all the clusters of words and phrases under the same heading, creating an even clearer picture of the

themes for each participant, which could be quickly compared with the mind-maps for the other participants.

The next step of this thematic analysis was to bring in the existentials that I discussed earlier. A process where the themes and thematic expressions on the mind-maps were reviewed against the descriptions of the existentials was conducted, and labelled depending on which they most seemed to be related to. This provided a further and more nuanced understanding of the themes and aided me in discovering the commonalities between the interviews and the phenomena experienced.

Once the mind-maps were complete the themes and their commonalities across participants were easy to see and a clear picture of the main phenomena of the lifeworld of the participants was revealed. This left the final step of the analysis to be undertaken, which was to group the connected and related themes together. This was undertaken during the writing, where, as the phenomena became clearer, they could be grouped into three separate chapters based on their relationship. A summary of the thematic analysis applied in this study is illustrated in figure 2 below.

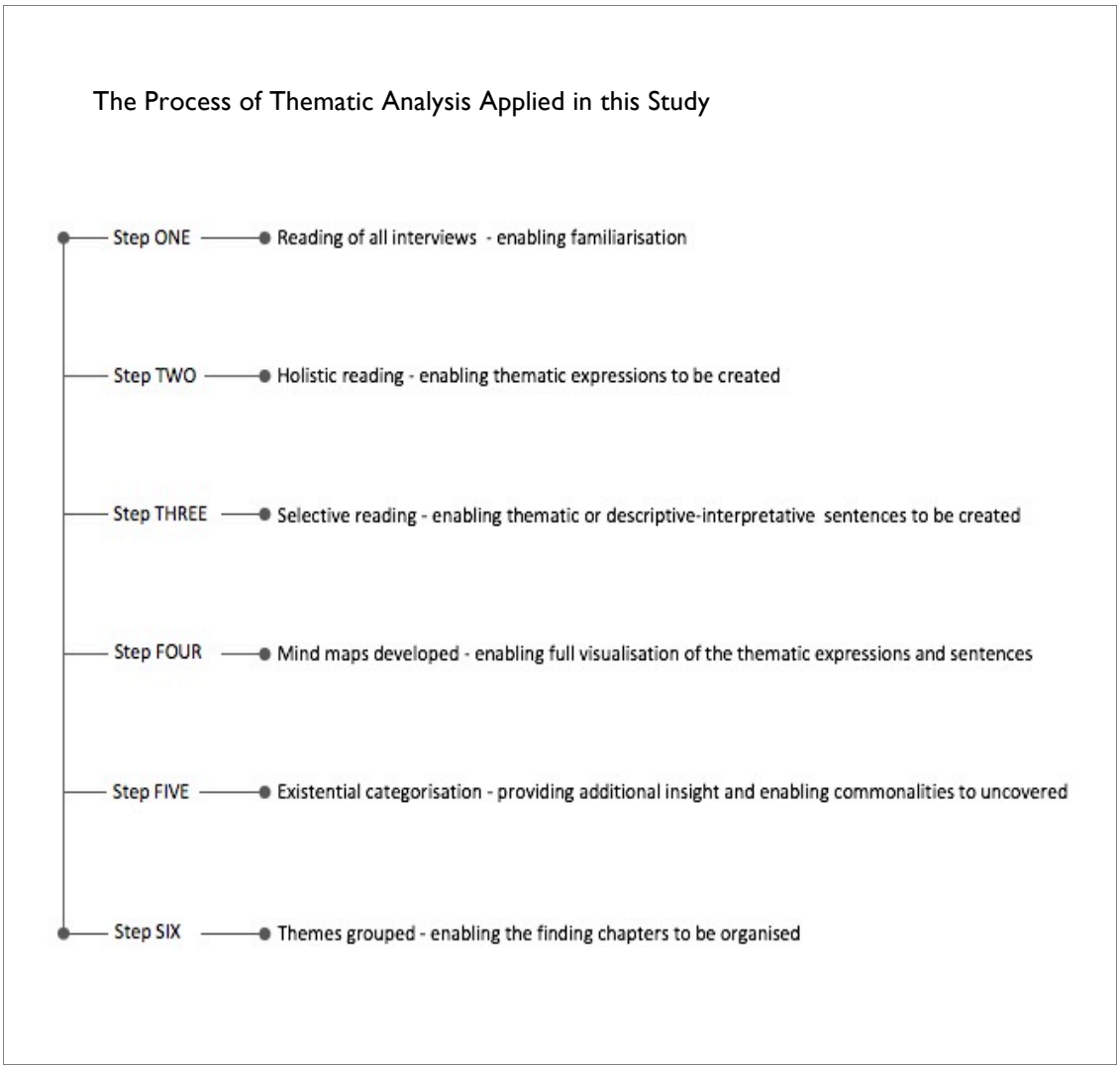

Figure 2

3.2.10 Writing

Van Manen sees writing as a fundamental component of phenomenological research, something at the heart of the phenomenological project that "not only describes what something is, it also explores what this phenomenon can mean but offering possible interpretations" (van Manen, 2014, p.390). He suggests that phenomenological research is conducted through writing and this differs spatially, temporally and relationally from speaking. Its purpose is to not only provide an understanding of the phenomenon for the reader but also to "lead the reader to wonder" (ibid, p.360), a key point of van Manen's phenomenology touched upon earlier. It is also an activity of thinking and reflection, where the writer uncovers and finds meaning not just in the phenomenon but also in themselves, something van Manen

describes as a "kind of self-making or forming" (ibid, p.364-365) activity. He summarises this by saying that the phenomenological "researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being. Sensitive phenomenological texts reflect on life while reflecting life" (ibid, p.391). Van Manen's approach to writing is not typical and is quite different from traditional academic styles, where the "writing is objective, using language techniques that generally maintain an impersonal tone" (Macmillan and Weyes, 2007, p.105-106). Van Manen's style instead not only appeals to the evocative and poetic, but is also personal, where the author, or at least their experience, is central to the composition of the prose.

To achieve this level and style of phenomenological writing is not an easy task and it is something that van Manen feels he is still in a process of learning. However he provides some suggestions for writing that I have adopted in this research. The most important and useful was the practice of draft writing, or the process of writing, reading, reflection and re-writing. The "intent… [here] is that each draft keeps circulating in increasingly complex layers and directions. Every draft engages the style and intent of the other draft. This is not so much a hermeneutic circle as it is a kind of constant circulating in all relevant directions that a phenomenological question may entice the author to extend him or herself" (van Manen, 2014, p.379). For the purpose of this research this was more than just iterations upon iterations of draft copies, and instead became a method to not only continue to analyse the participants' narratives, but to explore and examine the phenomenon in greater depth, a method to not just interpret the phenomenon examined, but to instil wonder (van Manen, 2014). In practice this meant hours of writing, reading, reflection and re-writing, to ensure that the lifeworld of the participants could be captured in written language.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

3.3.1 An Overview

Psychological research has the potential to bring knowledge and improvement to the human condition, but – like all research - it also has the potential to cause harm. Therefore, this study was undertaken in an ethical and professional manner with a considerable focus placed upon minimising harm or the risk of harm, in compliance with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics (2018, 2009), the 2018 Data Protection Act, and GDPR 2016. The policies and practices of the two establishments involved in the study were adhered to or followed as closely as possible, and are explained in this section.

3.3.2 Consent - (1.3) Standard of Informed Consent - (The BPS, 2009, p.12).

A serious ethical concern for psychological research is ensuring that all participants are fully informed of the objectives and methods of the research and give their consent to participate. The Association of Social Anthropologists (1999) explains this principle in the following way:

> Following the precedent set by the Nuremberg Trials and the constitutional laws of many countries, inquiries involving human subjects should be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The principle of informed consent expresses the belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between social researchers and the people whom they study (p.3)

The drop-in centre's Client Rights Policy (2013) specifically tackles this point when they say; "people who access this service will not be the subject of any research or have any information or photographs taken without their signed consent" (p.1). Their policy also recommends that when a meeting or some other kind of involvement is required from a client (user of their facilities) he or she must be provided with the "necessary documents/information (minutes, agendas, term of reference) in an accessible, user-

friendly format in advance of the meeting" (Client Involvement Policy, 2013, p.2 - see appendix 6). Therefore, for this study, the following was undertaken:

- A full written explanation of the study, its purpose and the right to withdraw for each participant before any data is collected, was produced and given to each potential participant before the consent interview and read through at that interview (see appendix 2)
- A verbal explanation of the full details of the study and how participants and their stories will be used was given in private to each potential participant
- Each participant was asked to give both verbal and if possible written consent (see appendix 2).

Due to the nature of this study and its intended participant target group there was the possibility that some potential participants would not be able to read or may not be native speakers of English. This is a situation mentioned in the BPS code of ethics as follows:

> Remain alert to the possibility that those people for whom professional services or research participation are contemplated may lack the legal capacity for informed consent (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.12).

The plan for such an occurrence was to suspend the request for consent and request advice from a member of staff at the appropriate location before deciding whether to continue with the particular participant selection for the study. Fortunately this circumstance never arose, with all potential participants being native speakers, able to read and capable of giving informed consent.

3.3.3 The Right to Withdraw - (1.4) Standards of Self-Determination - (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.14).

A necessary consideration for this research was the understanding and provision that a participant may change their mind about being involved in the research study at any time, including after they have given their informed consent. In such circumstances the participants were given the right, and fully informed, that they could withdraw from the research at any time, and this would include the data collected about

them. Therefore in the beginning, during and at the completion of the research participants were made fully aware of this option, something explained the BPS Code of Ethics as follows:

> Ensure from the first contact that clients are aware of their right to withdraw at any time from the receipt of professional services or from research participation (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.14).

The ASA explains this issue slightly differently but with the same meaning:

> Consent in research is a process, not a one-off event, and may require renegotiation over time; it is an issue to which the anthropologist should return periodically (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, 1999, p.3).

Although there were no formal policies at either of the study locations regarding withdrawing from research the managers and relevant staff were informed of this procedure as part of the overall briefing about the research.

3.3.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity - (1.2) Standard of Privacy and Confidentiality - (The BPS, 2009, p.10).

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was a serious consideration for this study. The BPS (2009) sees this as a key ethical principle and recommends that the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant should be ensured and that this needs to be fully explained to the participants at the outset of research. However they also recognise that it may not always be possible or in the interest of the participant to do this, and explain this as follows:

> Strict breaches of confidentiality to those exceptional circumstances under which there appears sufficient evidence to raise serious concern about:
>
> (a) The safety of clients;
>
> (b) The safety of other persons who may be endangered by the client's behaviour; or

(c) The health, welfare or safety of children or vulnerable adults (ibid, p.11).

The ASA discuss this situation as follows:

> Rights to confidentiality and anonymity: informants and other research participants should have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected. However, privacy and confidentiality present anthropologists with particularly difficult problems given the cultural and legal variations between societies and the various ways in which the real interests or research role of the ethnographer may not fully be realised by some or all of participants or may even become 'invisible' over time (1998, p.4).

To ensure proper confidentiality and anonymity was adhered to I drew upon the policy of each establishment with respect to their clients being involved in research. It was a policy that not only protected the identity of the participants but also detailed exclusions to this when the risk of self-harm or harm to others was imminent or strongly suspected (Drop-in Centre, 2013 - See appendix section 6).

There was another issue, not covered by the drop-in centre policies, that also had the possibility of impacting my ability to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This was the possibility of coming into contact with, or being exposed to, illegal or illicit activities or the intent to commit such. The BPS (2009) accepts that a researcher may be faced with such a dilemma, saying that a researcher should;

> (i) Recognise that ethical dilemmas will inevitably arise in the course of professional practice.
> (ii) Accept their responsibility to attempt to resolve such dilemmas with the appropriate combination of reflection, supervision, and consultation (p.15).

The approach I undertook throughout this study was to be both pragmatic and sensitive to any such issues, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity where it seemed reasonable and would not contribute to any wrong doing, and taking any issues I was unable to resolve to my supervisors in order to confer and decide what to do. It was a position that provided enough autonomy for me to manage the situation

and information I was exposed to as ethically as possible and to limit the harm to the participants, to the centres and to my own personal integrity.

3.3.5 Discomfort, Harm and Violence - (3.1) Standards of General Responsibility - (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.18).

The prevention and handling of discomfort, harm or violence towards the participants, the staff supporting my research, and myself were of serious concern to, particularly given the vulnerable situation that some of the participants were in. The BPS recommends that:

> (i) Avoid harming clients, but take into account that the interests of different clients may conflict. The psychologist will need to weigh these interests and the potential harm caused by alternative courses of action or inaction (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.18).

This is good advice, but it did not offer enough detail for this study and the potential issues that might be faced. Therefore, further guidance was sought and the ASA (1998) guidelines offered the following:

> Anticipating harms: Anthropologists should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects. Consent from subjects does not absolve anthropologists from their obligation to protect research participants as far as possible against the potentially harmful effects of research:
> (a) The researcher should try to minimise disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment (p.2).

This provides advice on two levels, first to be sensitive to the potential for harm and secondly to disturb the participants as little as possible. This was achieved on two fronts, first by locating myself in the environment that the participants felt most comfortable in, and secondly being very sensitive to the participants during the interviews. Here I paid close attention to their mental and physical state, adapting my questions and style to accommodate their moods and feelings as much as possible, for example moving away from topics that seemed difficult for them to talk about or were causing them to feel

pressured or stressed. Secondly, I would terminate interviews quickly if I felt the participant was not doing well or appeared to be struggling. This last point happened once when the participant seemed to be suffering from a hangover and on another occasion when they appeared to be under the influence of some narcotic. I also had the option of calling for assistance from staff or other trained volunteers if I thought the situation was serious, but this was not needed during this study.

One last point to reflect upon in this section concerns the possibility of violence towards the participants from others in the locations, or directed towards me. This was something that was a possibility due in part to the use and abuse of alcohol by many who are homeless, which I discovered was also a problem for some of the participants. Both locations had a zero-tolerance policy towards drugs and alcohol, but there were times when my participants and other users of the locations appeared to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This was dealt with by my withdrawal from the location or early termination of the interviews, again with the option of calling for assistance. The second way that violence was prevented was through maintaining a level of alertness and vigilance to the situation, something that provided the opportunity to see if a violent situation was developing and to then take actions to prevent or at least terminate the interview and withdraw from the location expediently.

3.3.6 Payment - Fair Return for Assistance - (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, 1999, p.4)

The intention at the outset of the study was to remunerate the participants for their time and stories. This raised some ethical issues and required consideration. The ASA (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, 1999) code of ethics states the following:

> There should be no economic exploitation of individual informants, translators and research participants; fair return should be made for their help and services (p.4)

Each participant was paid £5 for each interview session. This level of remuneration was discussed with the managers at both locations and, with the proviso that this involved a supermarket voucher that

could not be used for alcohol, they agreed with the practice and the amount offered.

One aspect of this remuneration strategy was advice from the managers of the locations to not disclose this intention until a participant had been selected and had agreed to participate. The fear was that it might encourage individuals to participate simply for the vouchers and that it may mean I would be inundated with participants. There was also the fear that others in the locations may find out about the payments and seek to take advantage of the participants of the study. Therefore, the remuneration activity was not revealed until the research began, a small piece of deception but something that seemed prudent given advice from staff.

3.3.7 Data Protection - (1.2) Standard of Privacy and Confidentiality - (The British Psychological Society, 2009, p.10).

The correct, ethical and legal management of the data was important to this study, particularly due to the quantity and sensitivity of that which was collected. The main issue was to make sure that the collection, storing and management of the data was kept private and that others would not be able to access it. Here the BPS (2009) states that in regard to the data one should:

> (iii.) Restrict the scope of disclosure to that which is consistent with professional purposes, the specifics of the initiating request or event, and (so far as required by the law) the specifics of the client's authorisation.
> (iv.) Record, process, and store confidential information in a fashion designed to avoid inadvertent disclosure (p.11).

Furthermore, schedule 1 point 7 of the Data Protection Act outlines the data protection principles in the following terms:

> Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data (Gov.UK, 2018).

To abide by this and ensure that the data was managed appropriately, including the identity of the participants, all the data was securely stored on my personal computer (utilising encryption protocol FireVault2) and neither shared nor transmitted to other individuals or entities, aside from my supervisors. Furthermore, excluding the consent form, all data was anonymised.

A final measure taken was informing all participants that they could have access to their data until the end of the study, whereupon it would be destroyed.

3.4 Reflexivity

3.4.1 Introduction to Reflexivity

Anäis Nin (1961) suggests that "we don't see things as they are, we see them as we are" (p.124). In this section I tackle this problem head on by exploring how I approached, thought about, and interpreted the data in this study. In other words I was turning back onto myself, providing a reflexive account of the experience of undertaking this study. Markham (2017) suggests that "we live, conduct research, and find meaning from particular positions. As researchers, our understanding of others is limited by [our] unnoticed frames of reference" (p.1). This section seeks to explore how my position and frames of reference contributed to this study.

Reflexivity is a core element of qualitative research. It provides an opportunity to bring further understanding and insight, through the recognition that "knowledge is always co-constructed, reflecting the choice and questions the researcher makes and brings as much as the experiences of the participants being recounted" (Langdridge, 2007, p.59). It is an approach to research that is the opposite of the "tradition of the researcher as a detached observer in search of some objective truth" (ibid). It is a delicate dance of language and subjectivity, a tangle of thoughts and ideas that require rigour and discipline to separate and deliver meaningful understanding. As a facet of qualitative research "there is great variation in practice. Reflexivity may be concentrated at one stage of the research, or applied

throughout the research process. It may be enhanced through discussion with colleagues and/or research, or simply by regular solitary reflections recorded in a research journal or diary" (Gough, 2008, p.22). To reveal and understand the nature of the impact of my subjectivity on this study, the tripartite model for conducting reflexivity proposed by Wilkinson (1988) will be utilised. This model recognises that although the personal position of the researcher is important, over-reliance on this singular perspective risks ignoring other factors that may have had been significant to the research. Wilkinson therefore suggests that two other positions need to be adopted, the first of which is a functional approach. This looks at the relationship between researcher and participant and how the power or status of the former may have affected or impacted the research. The third position is one that seeks to situate the research within its wider theoretical and academic traditions and then to understand how these may also have contributed to or influenced the research.

3.4.2 Setting Foot Inside a Drop-in-Centre

Stepping into the drop-in centre was an important and impactful experience for me. The drop-in centre is an old run-down place, with a wide-open expanse full of cheap chairs, tables and a few tatty sofas for homeless people to spend their mornings in. It is a place full of men, scruffy, sat around drinking tea and eating toast. There is a wariness and some hostility in the air but not the in-your-face threatening behaviour I have experienced when I visited and worked in prisons. Instead it is subtle and less overt, it is the quiet discrete look that men who have experienced violence give a stranger entering their space. It appeared to be a broken place for broken people, a place offering some sanctuary from the turmoil of the outside world. I am emotionally moved but also hesitant as I see men dozing or staring blankly into their mugs of industrial tea. It is a place I am not quite comfortable with and I am therefore reluctant to relax or drop my guard. There are predators and prey here, men who have experienced pain and suffering, but also those who have dealt it out.

Over the months of talking to the staff and being introduced to potential participants I begin to settle into a routine, becoming more acclimatised and accepted, I also begin to become hidden to the staff, volunteers and the various guests that roll through this place occasionally. It is an interesting experience,

as like the crummy decor, facilities and destitution of the men disappear to me so I become less visible. It feels like I am no longer seen as me, but instead as one of the homeless men, often mistaken by a nurse or volunteer offering me housing or welfare support. I become more embedded as my relationship with the place becomes more casual and frequent, and I begin to understand a little more about the routine of my participants, knowing when best I can catch them at the drop-in centre and when not. Although their lives could be seen as shambolic or lacking structure this was not the picture I saw. They all had their routines, interjected with appointments, events, and other things that life threw in their way. The regular unchanging nature of the place was something they could count on, as a place they could come to and fill their morning with idle chatter, tea and food. It was their café to hang out in, a place free, simple and enough to spend a few hours of their time.

The drop-in centre was the main place in which I spent my time interviewing the participants. It became a totem, a place that captured some of the contexts of my participants and so contributed to how I felt about them. My journey from an initial reluctance and trepidation about the place to eventually feeling acclimatised and comfortable became a metaphor for how I felt about and reacted to the men who were homeless. It was a strange place tucked away on an industrial state, somewhere few with better options would willingly go and hang out, but over time it became a place that not only provided for my research but provided some insight into the lifeworld of the participants. This was not an interview space for them, instead it was a place for food, tea, warmth and most importantly of all, company. It was a place that helped to construct how I felt, and therefore wrote, about my participants, placing them in a context which I experienced first-hand. It was a place of context and therefore meaning, a glimpse into a world that these men inhabited.

3.4.3 Coming Face-to-Face with the Participants

In this section I will utilise a position of functional reflexivity to examine the contact I had with the participants, as well as those who were unwilling to participate.

Many of the individuals I met and asked about participating in my study were reluctant, leading me to become fed up with feeling rejected. I wrote the following in my journal, "another refusal, not feeling

liked." They were probably refusing my offer to become a participant because they simply did not want to be subject to any more intrusion into their lives, with my position and authority making little difference to them. I was someone who wanted something from them, which many were just not prepared to accede to. Those who did agree were paid with a supermarket voucher, which although welcome by them had the effect of fundamentally changing our relationship. No longer was I simply someone interested in their experience of homelessness, I was also someone able to provide something they did not have. I was in a small way a benefactor, someone with more than them, and in that way it was uncomfortable for me. I wanted to reimburse them for their time, I wanted to show my gratitude, but it was hard to escape the feeling that I was short-changing them somehow. However, although this level of agency or power I felt I had was uncomfortable for me it was also not a universal occurrence. For example one participant, Brian, told me that he did not need the £5.00 voucher and would give it to someone needier than him. This reversed the situation, whether he intended it to or not, as he changed the power dynamic in that moment. I was not helping him, and he was not giving the interview for the money, as instead this was his choice, on his terms, and he did not need me to pay him. This act made me reconsider some of my prejudices and beliefs about my position in the research. I had assumed that as the researcher I was controlling the interviews, and the payment seemed to further enhance this position. The experience with Brian made me question this. It provided the impetus to understand a little more about how the participants were able to recover or gain agency, something that became a significant aspect of my findings.

3.4.4 Meeting the Bodies of the Participants

In this section I will examine my personal reflexive orientation in the context of embodiment, looking at how my reactions to the bodies of my participants impacted my subjectivity.

One of the distinguishing features of many of my participants, and the wider community of homeless people in the drop-in centre, is their appearance. Here many, and probably most, wore clothes that were not necessarily dirty, but that were usually old and did not suit them at all. It was like they wore a specific uniform which worked to mark them out from others. One of the features of the drop-in centre was a room full of second-hand clothes and shoes that the men could take, although under supervision,

which kept them clothed but only contributed to them looking ill-dressed. Beyond their clothes many of the homeless men were also unkempt and scruffy, with poor haircuts, straggly beards or several days of stubble. Others were in a much worse state, looking more like the walking wounded, with soiled clothes and open sores on their legs or arms.

When I began interviewing my participants I was always immediately drawn to their appearance. It was a quick way to understand how they were, whether they were well or not doing so good. Their clothes and general appearance appeared to be a good barometer for their state of mind and overall well-being. For example, Brian always looked and dressed okay, in clean jeans, t-shirt, sweat top and jacket, such that you would pass him on the street without a second glance. He was always the easiest to talk to, he had it together, and this was reflected in how he looked. For others the situation was different, as noticed by me through many of my interviews. For example I noted the following about Bill, "he always seems to be wearing a sleeveless white vest, with his hairy shoulders and back hair sprouting all over the show." Of another participant, Frank, who was also typically untidy, I noted the following, "he is in dark clothes, looks a little dishevelled and dirty, not greatly so. Like everyone else [here], fashion is not high on his list." For most of the participants the level of unkemptness was quite visible. On one occasion I encountered an extreme situation, with one of my participants called Tony. Tony was living rough in the woods in the city. I had not seen him for several months when he turned up one morning at the drop-in centre. He agreed to be interviewed and hobbled into the small room for an interview. He was wearing two jackets, which is not uncommon for homeless people who live rough, and during the course of the interview removed both due to the room being too hot. He looked quite unwell and much less robust than when I had last seen him. I was picking up on his appearance and his body, recognising that he was not looking good. Then during the course of the interview he told me that he had spent eight weeks in hospital after being set on fire. He then showed me his back and legs. Both looked like well-cooked pieces of bacon. He was healing but had to keep moving to make himself comfortable due to his skin tightening from the burns and the pressure they brought to his body. It is hard to express the effect that Tony's experience had on me, as it was shocking and brought a new level of realism to my thinking about the lives of homeless people, and my participants specifically.

The bodies of the participants entered into my world during the interviews, and their impact was powerful, bringing home to me the chasm that existed between us. However it was more important

than this, as it became obvious that poor clothing, a lack of looking after their appearance or even the injury and un-wellness, were a clear barometer of their personal well-being. It demonstrated clearly where they were on the spectrum of homelessness and destitution. When they were broke, had little money, or were struggling with addiction, then they looked worse, their struggles apparent in the clothes they wore and the state of their overall appearance. Examples of this cropped up during the interviews frequently and are illustrated here by Brian's tale. I noted one day when I was about to interview him, "he looked quite different today. He is clean shaved, his hair cut, his face clean and his eyes sparkling. Also, his white vest was gone and he is wearing a nice v neck sweater. All a bit Miami Vice!" Brian was beginning to do okay, he was alert, happy and saw clearly where he was going and how he was going to achieve his goals. As such his appearance was a reflection of how well he was doing.

There were other aspects of the corporeal experience that caused me to reflect, but the appearance and overall well-being of my participants had the greatest impact. It was a clear illustration of what often separates homeless people from the broader population, but more importantly it became for me an indicator of where my participants were on the spectrum of homelessness.

Turning next to a discipline orientation, here I want to discuss briefly how academic research typically looks at the physical consequences of becoming homeless and what my position on this became during this study.

There is much research and considerable evidence of the detrimental effect on health that homelessness, and particularly rough sleeping, can have. It is a view rarely challenged and is part of the general thinking surrounding this topic. However, during my research it became apparent that this situation was much more nuanced than just seeing homelessness as causing poor health. By this I mean that during my interviews I began to see the participants as experiencing all kinds of problems, with many of them struggling with relationships, work, addiction and a host of other issues, and struggling with their health seemed no different from this. It became increasingly apparent to me that those who were managing their lives successfully, navigating the benefits system, living somewhere they liked, were, at least on the face of it, healthier. Poor health seemed not so much a consequence of their homelessness as just another issue in their lives that they struggled with. This may seem a small or obvious point, but it felt like a paradigm shift for me. This was not in dispute with the notion that homelessness can be detrimental

to one's health, but instead a position in which I saw participants as people who might struggle with all sorts of issues, with their ability to look after their health emerging as another indicator, much like the discussion on appearance above, of how well they were managing their lives. Coming into contact with the corporeality of the participants was an important part of this research project for me and brought new insight into their lived world.

3.4.5 Constructing a Narrative

In this final section I move from the interviewing to the writing of my findings, exploring how my subjectivity, from a personal reflective position, slipped into the words and phrases I authored. Unlike the experience of going to the drop-in centre or hostel, or coming face-to-face with the participants, the writing was a much more reflective activity, undertaken alone and over an extended period. It became an activity of not just phenomenological analysis but of deep reflection, where the phenomenon I was exploring ran up against some of the typical narratives surrounding the world of homelessness. A good example of this was the phenomenon of types of work, which features strongly in the findings.

As I wrote I became increasingly aware of the plurality of the meaning of work, seeing it as something multifaceted, manifesting across all kinds of circumstances and situations. Van Manen (2014) suggests that phenomenological writing should create a sense of wonder in the reader. Writing, especially about the phenomenon of types of work, had this effect on me, wherein I became increasingly curious about the meaning of work and how it was used to judge the world of others. This wonder began with considering the efforts that many of the participants undertook to satisfy the strict and stringent criteria of the Job Centre to be eligible for benefits. Here it became increasingly apparent that my view of what constituted work was overly narrow, insufficient and inadequate to capture the full reality of the situation. Work for me was synonymous with employment or having a job, but through my background reading into the history and meaning of work, combined with reflecting on the experience of the participants, my personal definition changed. Work became a concept much broader in meaning, something that could also embrace those efforts and activities that people undertake to live, survive and flourish in their environment.

Taking this broader view of the meaning of work brought new insight into the experience of the participants at the Job Centre. I realised that they were not casually adhering to the strict regime of the Job Centre, but taking the rules and regulations seriously and committing a level of energy and thought to their compliance. They, like the paid staff at the Job Centre, seemed to be working. Their hours may have been much less but the consequences of them not fulfilling the job seeker's criteria were serious and included sanctioning, where their benefits could be stopped. Of course this view of work is controversial, flying in the face of the present societal view of what constitutes work. However, by applying this broader definition my view of the participants and the wider population of homeless people changed. This illustrated clearly to me that our preconceptions about homelessness are fragile and built less on individuals' lived experience and more on our typically uncontested views and prejudices.

As I continued to write I was struck again and again by the realisation that our views of homelessness are based on an image of society and the roles its members play that do not reflect the reality of their lived experience. I understood that challenging these views may bring insight and understanding beyond the typical responses that pepper social policy. My re-definition of work was one such example, but there were many others jumping out of the words and phrases I wrote and reflected upon. Van Manen (2014) was right that phenomenological writing should elicit a sense of wonder, and for me as I wrote it did just this.

This section explored how my subjectivity affected this study, despite my efforts to maintain a phenomenological attitude. However I have also shown how psychological phenomenological studies such as this are always a work of co-production between the data and the researcher, an activity of co-construction that brings forth and reveals the lifeworld of the participants as they experience it.

Chapter 4 - Findings - The Experience of Boredom, Shame and Self-Improvement

This chapter examines the intrapsychic world of the participants, examining their lived worlds in terms of those elements that impact and affect their minds. The first of the three themes explored is boredom and how this manifested in the lifeworld of the participants.

4.1 The Experience of Boredom

> You discover boredom which is inseparable from poverty; the times when you have nothing to do and, being underfed, can interest yourself in nothing. Or half a day at a time you lie on your bed, feeling like the jeune squelette in Baudelaire's poem. Only food can rouse you.
>
> George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, 1933

"Who is not acquainted with it [boredom] – and yet who can say freely what this universally familiar phenomenon is?" (Heidegger, [1938] 1983, p.79). Boredom, and the effort undertaken to avoid it, was a regular feature for the participants in this study, with its manifestation and occurrence being varied and consequential. Across the study a significant finding was the preoccupation by the participants with preventing or putting off the boredom which typically occurred for them during those periods where there was nothing to do, where they were caught between their poverty and a lack of places to go. This arose most starkly during public holidays, those days of the year when the libraries, drop-in centres and charity run schemes are shut. As Jonathan says:

> With bank holidays, being on my own and hardly anywhere is open, so I'm no, not another bank holiday please.

The social world stops for Jonathan as the shutters and doors of the spaces he frequents remain locked and still. He is forced to spend time with himself, not distracted or entertained by others, not engaged in some activity. He is alone, by himself and bored. He is caught in Heidegger's temporal limbo of being

'bored by' ([1953] 2010), which is a liminal state where people, places or activities, or particularly the lack of them, are the source of boredom and bring about a feeling of being empty and hollow. For the participants public holidays, those national events which many of us who are not homeless look forward to, are boring, especially as they have no job, no money, and their typical routines become halted and denied to them when everything closes. Ryan summarises this with his experience of Easter. Describing what he does, he says:

> Absolutely nothing, mate. Didn't do much. No premiere league football either last week, it was boring.

For the participants public holidays exemplify the temporal nature of boredom, where movement and progress halt, where nothing interesting or engaging occurs, where they are caught fast during the pauses created by a public holiday. Boredom also occurred during a normal day, where the participants are denied the opportunity to fill their time with something captivating, for example:

> I might go up there [the library] for an hour. That's the worst thing about the library now, you know, closes at 5 doesn't it! Used to be 8 o'clock, so that was handy. I could spend the last couple of hours up there. (Ryan)

This being 'bored by' having nothing to do, intensified by early closing times or public holidays, is something that the participants strive hard to resist. Although universally unemployed the need to fill their time in a constructive and meaningful way was a serious and consuming activity, something that they worked at. For example Ryan spends some of his time volunteering at the homeless charity, singing in the choir, reading at the library and studying with a local drama group. He says, "I've got to do something."

The need to "do something" is a central theme brought about from being 'bored by' for the participants, where they needed to fill their time with 'something' that captured their minds and energy. Just as Ryan throws himself into a multitude of activities, others also filled their schedule with activities and events that captured their attention and their imagination. For example Mervin, leaving school with little or no qualifications, talks about discovering Shakespeare:

> I love Shakespeare. Such ... Such dynamite language... It's such dynamite... Shakespeare... Absolute dynamite… Look how modern it is. You know? You get past the... The language and the tone, it's just so modern.

Reading in the library Mervin is captivated by the literature, becoming moved beyond his world and experience. It is the antonym of time not being filled. Boredom is absent and removed for Mervin through the words of Shakespeare as he reads quietly to himself in the library.

What became very apparent within the study was the choice of activities that the participants gravitated towards to halt the onset of boredom. These were typically focussed on creative and/or aesthetic endeavours, such as art, music, theatre, singing, reading and writing. They appeared to provide not just 'something' to do, but 'something' that would captivate and enthral. For example when Colin talks about learning to play the guitar he describes it as follows:

> A whole new avenue, a whole new life… I feel, yeah, I feel great. I feel so happy… It's brilliant.

The participants not only needed to fill their time, but to do so in a way that totally captured their attention. This contrasts with some of Bargdill's (2000) findings, that some individuals faced with boredom "became passive and avoidant toward their lives; when ideas and opportunities for new activities arose, the participants did not pursue them because they anticipated that those activities would be or become boring." (p.494). Contrary to this, some of the participants did not just find 'something' to do, they chose to do 'something' that was challenging and new to them, something creative which went beyond merely just keeping busy. Svendsen (2005) suggests that we try to block boredom by "piling on increasingly new and more potent sensations and impressions… we believe that we will manage to establish a substantial self, free of boredom, if only we manage to fill it with a sufficient number of impulses" (Svendsen, Chapter 1). It seems that the participants were doing something that was more than simply filling their time, as involvement in art and creative enterprises brought something meaningful, a 'potent' concoction of stimuli to fill their time, thereby freeing them from boredom.

Boredom enters the participants' temporal worlds when they are empty of activities, of stimulation and of arousal. They are 'bored by' the emptiness created when the world around them closes, when the opportunity to be creative or constructive or simply engage with something stops. It is clear that they work, sometimes fervently, to free themselves from boredom by seeking out and engaging in experiences that are aesthetic and highly stimulating. O'Neil's (2017) study of homelessness in Romania shows how homeless people there also sought external stimulation to avoid this kind of boredom. For this study, paradoxically it seems, being 'bored by' public holidays, early closing, long-weekends and festive celebrations leads to, at least for some of the participants, a life enhanced and coloured by art, literature and music. Frank succinctly summarises when he says "[I draw] because I am bored."

Unlike being 'bored by', which was common and frequently expressed by the participants, Heidegger's being 'bored with' ([1927] 2010) was more discreet and hidden during the interviews. It is boredom generated from within the self, an experience of becoming adrift and decoupled. Within the interviews this decoupling became apparent when the participants reflected upon their lives, sharing where they were and how they felt about it. For example, when Frank talks about his life in a hostel he says:

> It is like a prison. My mate, my mate called it a prison once… I don't like being on my own. Talking to myself all night and…

The only company Frank has is himself, stuck and alone in his room, talking to himself in the darkness: a one-way conversation where he comes face-to-face with the reality of his situation, a man alone. There is despair, pain and suffering in this scene, but there is also boredom, boredom with a life that has lost much of its meaning. This is a man forced to reflect on his homelessness in his prison cell like hostel room.

For others the boredom with their lives was less painful, but it was still there and effort was required to escape from it. For example Bill, talking about his routine, says:

> But, that's when I look at, then I've got, I've got to have something else in my life now. It's coming a bit stale Steve. I come in here too much…

His routine is becoming "stale," which could be interpreted as becoming 'bored by'. However looking deeper into his words it appears that his routine is staleness, he has stalled and feels stuck, unable to progress and become something more. He is not suffering the deep and existential boredom of Frank - a kind of boredom where one is literally "being held in limbo to time in its standing" (Heidegger, [1938] 1983, p.126) - and is, therefore, able to make plans to resist and rise above it. This 'staleness' was not something felt solely by Bill. For example Jonathan talks about his life before he began finding some meaning to his existence through volunteering:

> Out of work and getting nowhere. I was just getting more and more depressed. I was just sitting around, moping and doing nothing. Uh. Just traipsing… just traipsing up to the Job Centre and getting nowhere.

Jonathan's boredom went beyond simply having nothing to do, as he can only mope and traipse, he is lethargic and dull. His life, on becoming unemployed and then homeless, has brought him to himself: an existence without content or meaning. His boredom is with himself, empty of meaning and lost to time.

There is something quite horrific about being bored with oneself, how it cuts to the core of the individual, frustrating and depressing all in one, with no place to go, no thought to distract. For the participants it was a place, a circumstance, that they felt deep within themselves. And unlike being 'bored by', which was temporal, happening and then ending, being 'bored with' was something with much more longevity, ensnaring the souls of the participants.

It is only a small step that needs to be taken from being 'bored with' oneself to becoming 'profoundly bored' (Heidegger, [1938] 1983), that state where the individual is completely frozen and lost to the world, with no opportunity for a constructive future. For the participants, although this was not clearly voiced, they were intimately aware of the possibility of 'profound boredom', seeing its consequences every day around them in the booze and drug dulled eyes of their peers. This drug and alcohol dependency amongst homeless people has been widely written about (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999, Hopper, 2003, Hough and Rice, 2011, McNaughton, 2008, Neale and Brown, 2016, Reeve et al., 2009, Snow and Anderson, 1993, Wasserman and Clair, 2010). Frequently alcoholism is seen as either a cause or a consequence of homelessness (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2013, Hopper, 2003, McQuistion et al.,

2013, McNaughton, 2008, Snow and Anderson, 1993, Wasserman and Clair, 2010). For some of the participants it was an anaesthetic to the 'trauma' and pain of their homelessness. Colin recounts his issues with alcohol:

> I was still, I was still basically, um ... I got into really bad, heavily drinking. I mean, I was drinking, um ... When I'm, when I'm still working, and just after I, um, just while I was starting going on to, um, Statutory Sick Pay I was drinking about four or five days, five nights a week. And I was doing, um, 13 pints, and a bottle or two bottles of, uh, shorts a night, forth time ... four or five times a week. And, um, that was going on, and on, and on, and, um, people were saying to me, That's gonna make you feel worse. It's a depressant.

What is left unspoken here is exactly what it is that Colin is trying to depress. However in a subsequent interview he brings some light to the issue when he says:

> I'm concentrating more on this stuff (art) than being bored out of me head, or just trying to like sleep the rest of my life away.

Colin is trying to avoid boredom, a boredom that literally drives him out of his head: a pernicious and debilitating boredom, akin to him 'sleeping his life away'. He experiences a form of boredom deep and profound enough for him to work hard to escape its grasp, initially through alcohol and later through arts and crafts. This is a 'profound boredom' that surrounds and infiltrates of the lives of many individuals experiencing homelessness. It is boredom where the person "become[s] increasingly aware of their boredom and feelings of emptiness, but they feel that action is futile - that every action would lead to boredom - so their boredom becomes habitual" (Bargdill, 2016, p.188). This 'profound boredom' is not always named but it reaches out and touches the participants of this study as they walk past their peers drinking in the alleyways or curled up in a doorway, individuals that Bargdill suggests give up caring and become apathetic about their lives, "act[ing] in ways that they knew were not in their best interest, in destructive ways" (2016, p.199). However, for some of the participants the effect of this boredom was so strongly felt that even the solace offered by alcohol was not taken up, as they literally become "emotionally ambivalent" (ibid, p.196) to their lives. Frank shares his thoughts on this when he says:

And some of them don't drink, it's just that they're so bored, they don't want to do nothing.

It is as if this 'profound boredom' has robbed Colin and Frank of their very being, creating a level of depression and despondency that could be hard to recover from. It is a deep and troubling sickness. It is Heidegger's final and most painful form of boredom, it is 'profound boredom', extreme and unbearable. This final level of boredom explains in part why homeless people may turn to alcohol and other addictions to alleviate its pain or try to escape it completely. It is the final level of the tripartite of boredom, deep and engulfing, a violation against our being. It manifests in and across the temporal world, stopping momentum, where our past, present and future disappear. It is boredom that we cannot turn away from, it is boredom where "nothing matters any more, everything is utterly and indifferently irrelevant. [We become] a non-person, a 'no one'… facing an all-encompassing void" (Slaby, 2010, p.113). It is the fracturing of Dasein as temporality ceases for us.

For the participants of this study boredom was a constant phenomenon, reminding them not only of where they were, but in some cases also how far they had fallen from their previous lives. Many of them dealt with this through alcohol or other drugs, but, significantly for this study, there were those who undertook aesthetic and creative activities for their succour. Not only was the uptake of these kinds of activities high amongst the participants but the effort or work that they applied was often intense and encompassing, creating moments of bliss and peace in otherwise difficult and poor lives. In this way boredom, at least in moderate and temperate doses, may not just be a problem for individuals experiencing homelessness, it may also be their saviour.

4.2 The Experience of Shame

Live in thy shame but die not shame with thee.

Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 1595

Shame is an injury to our dignity, finding home within our lived-body (Brenner, 2009). It is "the receptive perception of a reality, of a feeling, but also the progressive self-constitution that goes along with the feeling" (Brenner, 2009, p.485). It was an emotion that was a frequent and tangible occurrence within this study, something that coloured and negatively impacted some of the participants. It is a phenomenon of many parts, each interacting and providing shape to an experience that was often negative and painful. This is captured well by Ryan when he explains coming face to face with his mother when he was in prison:

> But mum always wanted me to become, uh, I don't know, a normal sort of person. She wanted what's best for me. And to see the look on her face, but I … I just shuddered … I just ran away, I cried. I was crying. I just couldn't face her.

Shame was an experience of regret for Ryan, a feeling of what should not have been done or said. A feeling constructed from hindsight, it is about him looking back, seeing what was and grieving for that. It is shame for Ryan, as an experience of regret existing in the temporal phenomenon, where the thoughts about his past are carried into his present.

For the participants this reflection was typical, and for some pervasive, often becoming all-consuming, exaggerated and self-harming. For example Ryan relays how he regretted the pain he brought his mother, a regret so profound and hurtful that he says:

> … if I had a gun I would have shot me self.

However, in this study, for shame to manifest it appeared to require one essential ingredient. It needed a witness: a second person to see and observe. Shame it seems is a phenomenon that starts in the sphere of intersubjectivity, existing between the participant and another. This need for an audience for shame

to be manifested is an interpretation favoured by Harré (1990), who argues that it "is occasioned by the realisation that others have become aware that what one has been doing has been a moral infraction" (p.199). Sartre (1943) calls this audience the 'Other', which is the critical element for the awakening of one's "reflective self-consciousness" (Dolezal, 2012, p.16), a situation where "the self-gains thematic awareness of the body, forming a public and self-conscious sense of how the body appears to others" (Dolezal, 2012, p.16). Sartre shows that shame can manifest from the glance of the 'Other', which he describes as follows: "here I am bent over keyhole; suddenly I hear footsteps. I shudder as a wave of shame sweeps over me. Somebody has seen me. I straighten up. My eyes run over the deserted corridor. It was a false alarm" (1943, p.277). For James the 'Other' sees him when he begs:

> Coz, I used to beg on the streets, like, to support my addiction (drug), and then uh, and I thought that man it's crazy like, so, people who knew me would keep coming past and they didn't know what I was up to and all that like… It was, it was hurtful for them to see me the way I was and it was hurtful for me to…

The pain was felt by James as he was witnessed begging by those he knew. His humiliation was shared by both him and the witnesses, where shame is constructed and then held in the space between James and those who saw him. It is shame as a phenomenon caught temporarily and spatially between James and the 'Others'. It is "shame before somebody" (Sartre, 1943, p.276), shame delivered in one's exposure to 'Others.'

As shame manifests when witnessed, it also diminishes or simply fails to arise when there are no others to observe the transgression. Shame, it seems, for the participants was always a construction between two or more people. When acts typically thought to be humiliating, lowly, gross or illegal were undertaken without witness, without an 'Other', then there was no trace, no place for shame to happen. For example many of the participants found themselves in circumstances, undertaking activities that were potentially shaming, for example salvaging food from wheelie bins, scavenging for sustenance in the rubbish of others. However, rather than being struck by shame, feeling injury to their pride as they clawed through the rubbish of others, they instead showed apathy to the situation, or at times, even pride, born of their resourcefulness. An example of this is captured in the words of Bill as he describes his foraging as being 'food-wise'. He says:

> There was a … shop… and what I used to do, 10 o'clock at night, the sandwiches and the pasties and things like that, which was… They couldn't sell the next day… I used to watch them put it in a bin round the back, so I used to… That's where I used to get my food from. I used to go in the bin… It was all packed up, yeah, but that's the only way I could find the food. So that…. That kept me food-wise going there…

Even in the telling (to me) of such transgressions shame seemed to fail to materialise, or least was not something that I was aware of. Sartre (1943) suggests that there are three key elements, a triangulation of relationship between "me, myself and other" (Guenther, 2011, p.4), necessary for shame to manifest, an 'I', a 'self' and an 'Other' (Sartre, 1943, p.289). For some reason shame was short-circuited during our conversations, some element was missing, removing the opportunity for shame to manifest when I was a secondary witness of the tale.

The experience of shame for the participants was a collaborative exercise, witnessed and then created in the intersubjective space between them and 'Others'. However, this study shows that being witnessed when transgressing is not sufficient for shame to appear, that being observed, or believing oneself to be, does not automatically result in the manifestation of shame. There is also something critical about the nature of the relationship and the context of the event that matters in constructing shame. Within this study the witness, the collaborator in the construction of shame, the 'Other' of Sartre (1943), it appears, needed to have had some kind of positive, important relationship with the participant. There had to be a level of closeness, where the witness and the participant were connected to each other, they needed to have a relationship that really did matter, or really had mattered, to them. Sartre discusses shame in this context when he states:

> Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being an object; that is, of recognizing myself in the degraded, fixed and independent being which I am for the Other. Shame is the feeling of an original fall, not because of the fact I may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I have 'fallen' into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am (1943, p.289).

For the participants the experience of shame arises from a construction between two or more people, created through a dance of intersubjectivity. It arises from a blend of actions that are undignified or degrading, and then given life through the witness of someone who matters to the individual. Sometimes though the mix of personal transgression and a close witness can result in a feeling far less intense or injurious than shame, even when the witness is someone close and intimate to the individual. To illustrate this failure of shame manifesting we return to Ryan and his story of being caught at the bookmaker's gambling rather than sharing a promised meal with his partner. He says:

> She comes in [to the bookies], she got the tray, got the fish and chips on the tray, like bangs the tray on the counter. Like says, you live fucking here, you might as well fucking eat here!

This is a moment where gambling addiction and the promise of a meal together collide, announced to all as the tray bangs upon the counter. Despite a level of regret and sorrow there appears to be little or no shame for Ryan. He says: "I knew then that I could do more or less anything I wanted to, and she didn't accept that". The inequality in the relationship seemingly dampens what could have been a very humiliating experience. She was not an 'Other' who mattered to him at this time, and their relationship ended shortly after this experience, suggesting that she did not matter enough for Ryan to feel any deep level of shame.

The absence of feeling shame in Ryan's example provides further opportunity for understanding how it is specifically constructed. Even when a transgression is witnessed by those we are in a relationship with the phenomenon of shame may not materialise: it instead remains dormant, unrealised and unfelt. It is not something that could always be counted on, even when circumstances would seem to demand it.

As shame manifested across the study for the participants there were other times it was resisted. This was particularly clear with respect to the experience of receiving welfare benefits, an activity providing a rich possibility for shame, where an individual comes face-to-face with the financial realities of their lives and finds themselves unable to provide for their needs. The 2012 report 'Benefits Stigma' in Britain (Baumberg et al., 2012) explores and illustrates this situation expertly, providing overwhelming evidence and some powerful examples of the risk of shame when claiming benefits. However, within the current study this was not the experience of the participants, where claiming benefits was an activity absent of

shame. It was a situation where they were able to resist the sense of shame and to effectively block its manifestation. This defiance is something Foucault (1972) discusses, acknowledging that individuals are able to struggle against and bring to bear some "effective resistance" to various forms of panoptic scrutiny (p.162). To illustrate this resistance we return to Bill, who claims JSA (Job Seekers Allowance) and is emphatic about this experience when he says:

> I don't feel guilty… I don't feel guilty because I've paid into the State since I was 17, so I've got no qualms about getting something back. None, at all…

Bill shows no sign of guilt or shame here about receiving the benefit payment. He is possibly leaning upon the widely held social narrative that there is some legitimacy to receiving benefits for those who have contributed. For Bill, someone who only recently made the transition from employment to unemployment, he has developed some resistance to any blow to his self-esteem or injury to his pride in accepting benefits. Shame it seems is thwarted by his own sense of worth and value, where, despite his precarious circumstances, he keeps control over how he feels.

This ability to withstand or withhold the construction of shame conjures a new dimension to the phenomenon of shame, showing that it is not omnipotent, able to smother the individual in a cloak of guilt and remorse at will. Instead it is something that the participants, to varying degrees, can hold at bay, fending it off for a time, through creating a personal heuristic that can reduce the prospect of shame emerging. To further emphasise this point we turn back to Ryan, his experience of the welfare system and a problem he had with his payments. He says:

> Right, but then, they owe me all this money right, so what they've done, all the money I owe them is now squished and um, I ended up with a check for £470. Still in the bank that is. Which topped up what they actually owe me. So, everything is squashed now. I'm on £140 a fortnight… I get better money, so I'm thinking that's maybe someone saying, well, that's your reward.

Again there is no shame here, but instead some sense of justice, as Ryan gets what he thinks he is owed, getting his dues. Of course there may be other reasons for shame failing to manifest, however these examples of claiming welfare benefits do suggest that the participants seem to be demonstrating some

level of agency in preventing shame or guilt. As the experience of shame is explored and unravelled it becomes increasingly apparent that it is a complex and personal phenomenon, often unique to the individual but also with some common themes, such as the personal agency that the individual may have in either preventing its construction or reducing its effect.

The third aspect of the phenomenon of shame that surfaced across the study was redemption, or the act of winning back some of the lost pride, dignity or injury created by shame. As shame devalues one's self-worth the ability to plough forward and feel some level of pride is its antithesis. Within this study as the participants conveyed their stories of shame they also revealed how they either experienced or sought redemption. This may sound biblical, but it was much more ordinary, with participants finding worth and new meaning in art, theatre and other creative activities. Activities that were in stark contrast to their experience of shame, enabling them instead to grow and experience the joy of creating new ways to fill their future, were made all the more intense and illuminating because of their previous shame. An example highlighting this experience of redemption is that of Ryan. Discussing how art, theatre and volunteering had replaced his previous life of gambling addiction, he says:

> It's self-worth innit? It's makes me realise that I'm not as bad as what I used to be. Or, I'm not as bad as what I perceive myself to be… So, it's sort of, how can I put it? A sort of flippant way of looking at it is, um, I'm not what I'd call religious, but I believe in God, yeah… And I believe one day I'm going to have to stand in front of him and explain why I'm doing things. I'm just trying to balance the scales, you know what I mean... And I can look in the mirror in the morning, I can say well, I've done something useful.

So, although shame can be seen within the life of the participants in this study, worth and dignity were also present, found in some redemptive activity, providing a visceral and optimistic contrast to the phenomena of shame.

For the participants the pain and hurt of shame were often deep and precise. For many of the participants it was a sore, never healing, constantly reminding them of where they had come from. Shame was pain now, then and for their future. Shame was also full of nuance and meaning that clash and collaborate to create a phenomenon that is multifarious. Its genesis is in transgression, the undertaking of activity below

some subjectively perceived level of common decency. Then, critically, it is constructed intersubjectively, formed between two or more people, where the nature of that relationship impacts and affects the experience. It is a phenomenon borne of relationships. It can also shift from the existential sphere of relationality to one of temporality, polluting the past, impacting day-to-day lives, and having the potential to darken or shape the outcomes of the future. It is therefore also a phenomenon of temporality. Shame can also become embodied, moving beyond a fleeting and painful emotion and becoming part of the very being of the individual, living within their heart and memory, carried on weary backs and bowed heads. Finally, while shame can be carried forward into the future, the opportunity of redemption and escape from its clutches also exists, where the rediscovery of self-worth and self-esteem remains a possibility. Redemption ultimately provides a level of hope for those caught in the world without homes and experiencing shame.

4.3 The Experience of Self-Improvement

> It makes me realise that I'm not as bad as what I used to be. Or, I'm not as bad as what I perceive myself to be.
>
> Ryan

During the course of this study it became apparent that many of the participants had lives that were frequently filled with pain, anguish, hurt and loneliness. They were people struggling against their homelessness and the many issues arising from this. However, their lives and the possibilities that the future held for them were not always bleak or pessimistic. On occasion, for some of the participants their lives seemed to be transformed through their efforts to improve their health or learn a new hobby.

To illustrate this we begin with Bill's experience, whose descent into homelessness was a sudden and traumatic event. However, after moving through the hostel system into a controlled self-contained apartment he started to experience some real improvement in his life. This began with him getting his body back together. As he states: "I haven't had a drink now for... Since I've been to the hostel… [and] I want to get myself fit…". This is Bill trying to restore his body, a body that had become steadily more broken as he moved towards and then into homelessness; a body diminished and harmed as his drinking

increased and his confidence fell. For Bill this return to a more positive body is not something he comes to easily, but is rather something that he works at, initially through stopping drinking, which he describes as follows:

> I had problems in drinking and whatever, um and trying to always put a smiley face on and things like that, and you're living a lie basically, not just to protect you, but to protect those people around. Um... It started changing... I think it started changing when I... When the homeless charity got me here. Um, slowly but surely, um it started clearing in my head I think the drinking... Stopping the drinking was amazing. That was a real hard thing to do, because the situation, I mean... While you're drinking, but then when you wake up... You're so depressed and... you know, then all the thoughts and all the bad things and all the weird things in life are going up, so you go and have another drink to numb the pain really, bury your head in the sand I mean. So that... that was one of the hardest things I've ever done, was to stop drinking. The first 2 or 3 months were hard, but still...

Bill's cycle of drinking to numb the pain of life is clear and emphatic. He was a man who drank too much, caught in a spiral which he broke free of through the support of a homeless charity who found him a place to live. From this he began rebuilding his life and restoring his relationship with his body by stopping drinking. Bill comments on this as follows:

> So… I am just getting more avenues to make me better basically.

Bill is applying himself to become better, initially focussing on his physical health, restoring a relationship with his body through abstinence from drink. Over the course of the interviews he continues to apply himself to self-improvement, especially with respect to his health and fitness, which he describes as follows:

> You know and um, I've been a lot more positive you know, more positive…Well that kind of was, um, confidence really. And um if you have a shave in the morning and if you have a shower you feel better in yourself. You feel more confident… (Bill)

Taking care of yourself may not seem like such a major act of self-improvement, but for a person such as Bill, caught in a spiral of alcoholism and despair, it was a major step forward. As he begins to slowly lift himself out of his predicament it is a clear sign to him of his recovery. However it does not stop there, as his improvement continues and accelerates through the discovery of music. Through slow and unplanned steps Bill discovered the bongos and the joy of playing both alone and with others. Describing his experience of playing music together he says:

> [It] is brilliant, brilliant, you get a kick out, you get a buzz out, because we did percussion yesterday.

There is a 'brilliance' to playing music with others for Bill. This is a profound revelation for a man who has always kept to himself, alone and private, who through the shock of becoming broke and losing his home finds himself suddenly with a whole new group of homeless peers playing music together. The sheer joy he experiences is reflected in his description of buying his first set of bongos. He says:

> I scrapped and saved for a month, maybe two months to get my, my instruments. When, when you start putting two, three pound a week away you don't miss it. Um, and that, that's another positive thing in my life now. And it's only silly... It's only a set of bongos but it means a lot to me you know.

This happiness gained from learning and playing music was not just experienced by Bill. Colin had a similar experience with music, his discussion of which began with his purchase of a new a bass guitar. He says:

> Yeah, yeah because I've had enough with... with all the troubles and everything that I've had and all the… the setbacks I've had, quite recently as well - even in the last few weeks. Umm... with depression, anxiety and also with umm ... my back pains and that... my feet... arthritis in my feet and stuff. Umm... I thought "I've got to do something." And this is going to make me more determined to come off the alcohol as well…

Colin, like Bill, is tired of his body, tired of his depression, and he wants to move forward. He understands that he has to do something, that restoring his body is key to him moving forward. The way he goes about achieving this is also multifaceted, ranging from participating in art and education to learning to play the bass guitar. Turning to one of these activities, learning the guitar, Colin describes his early experience with the instrument:

> I, I wanted to do something and I wanted to, um, learn some kind of an instrument and then I think it was about two and a half, yeah, it's got to be about two and a half years ago, I started doing um guitars and it was acoustic guitars and um I played it and I couldn't get my left hand around the cords and I kept... it's not, it's not happening, like, you know? Too many strings, not enough fingers and, um, Ben says, uh, "Why don't you try bass guitar?" I says, "But this is an acoustic" He says, "Just use the top two strings, top two or three strings" which is the lower notes, lower strings and I found it a lot easier and I know, I know it sounds um so simple, but I was so happy to be able to play the bass line to Stray Cat Strut. That's an old one... bum bum bum bum bum bum. And when I learned that within, I learned that within five minutes cause it's so...

Colin's relationship with his body and the problems he encounters with it is revealed here, specifically with his fingers struggling over the strings of the guitar. His body is failing him, this time not through illness but dexterity. An experience of embodiment for Colin is further captured by Frank (1995) when he says; "the story was told through a wounded body" (Frank, 1995, p.2). However, through the skill of his teacher he finds a way to develop his dexterity and as his body begins to respond, music is made and suddenly a light is turned on in Colin. The problems with his body melt away, forgotten as he succeeds in playing a tune. Like Bill, Colin has used improvement with his body, and specifically his dexterity, to move forward. In that moment of discovering he can play the bass something positive changes within Colin.

Both Bill and Colin's examples are of people beginning to narrate a new, more positive story about themselves and their world. It is a form of storytelling wherein we tell ourselves new stories about who we are, a process of reframing our image of ourselves. Frank (1995) shows this in terms of how individuals suffering from illness are able to construct new more positive and therapeutic stories about their circumstances and futures. Both Bill and Colin are constructing their own wounded story,

illustrating how they move beyond the limits of their body's lack of dexterity, illness and pain. Bill's Cuban music playing story is a particularly clear example of this constructed narrative and is illustrated well in a photo he took for me of his apartment and bongos.

> It's simple. It's a simple photo (figure 3). It probably wouldn't mean anything to another person… Yeah, and to [me it is about] drumming and how far I've come on. (Bill)

Figure 3

A clear element of this self-improvement for Bill and Colin were these new stories, these new narratives. The participants who experienced this became authors, writing a more positive narrative of who they were and who they might become. It was "a chance to feel the world. And a chance to find oneself, clarify one's position on this earth, to take over one's own life" (Jacobsen, 2006, p.52). Bill's new story provides him with both hope and understanding with respect to how to lead a more fulfilled life. Citing Ricœur's work on 'narrative re-figuration', Spaten et al. (2011) show that this re-writing is a necessary episode in aiding movement beyond the trauma of bereavement. They say:

> There is a fundamental human need to re-configure the episodes of our lives together into a coherent narrative, a narrative in which we construct our identities. This is, in part, the product of a human attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, to bridge the gap between the vast, essentially infinite, quality of cosmic time and the limited, finite, nature of phenomenological time (as lived) (p.11).

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006) discuss how traumatic events can disrupt a personal narrative, where a person may "restructure the life narrative in a way that accommodates the unanticipated event (the trauma) … [as] part of the cognitive challenge of [the] trauma" (2006, p.9). For Frank (1995) this new narrative can also be restorative, where people "outdistance mortality by rendering illness transitionary" (p.115). As for Bill and Colin, we see them working through and developing new narratives, changing and becoming something new and transformed from what they were before becoming homeless. Their self-improvement is articulated through the writing of these new positive narratives. Ricœur (1991) mentions something relevant here when he says, "we learn to become the narrator of our own story without completely becoming the author of our own story" (1991, p.437). However, for the participants it remains unclear to what extent these new narratives are within either their control or their consciousness.

Another element of this phenomenon was how other people could be the catalysts or motivators for the experience of self-improvement. This is again illustrated through Bill's experience, where the support of another was the stimulus for him taking up music. In his case it was a pivotal conversation he had with a student nurse as follows:

> When I… I went to, um, basically, um… an open day the other week, and there… And they had a store there from the National… they had some nurses there from the NHS, I think they was medical… medical students, okay, and there they asked me one question, and they said, "what makes you smile?" And as soon as she said that I said "music, Cuban music." And her face lit up, she said, "that's the best answer I've had all day". (Bill)

A trigger for Bill's journey into music was a question during a simple conversation with a medical student and her positive response to his answer. There is something warm and touching here, in a moment that is sublime and meaningful for Bill. It is a moment in time where Bill sees his world beginning to re-configure. A world he sees reflected by another, through which the value of music is newly (now reflectively) visible to him. As he reveals his love of Cuban music to the medical student he is met with joy and acceptance. It is the start of a new narrative that brings "an irreducible dimension of the understanding of the self" (Ricœur, 1991, p.435) for Bill. He is a man who Cuban music makes smile. The conversation with the medical student is a moment for Bill that is transformational, revealing to him

something about his identity that becomes manifest and clear to him though her face and words. This transformation is constructed in the intersubjective realm of two people talking.

Bill was not alone in discovering or re-configuring his narratives with the help of others. Already we have seen that Colin's music teacher had encouraged him to start playing the bass guitar and this is further described by him as follows:

> Yeah. Yeah. He actually said there's not many, um, people that want to play bass in, in, in the group. They just want to play normal guitar. Even acoustic or, lead, or whatever. And, he says, uh, you'd be good at playing the bass. So, we went through that and, uh, we all started playing, um, Stray Cat Strut.

And Colin continues:

> No. It's a - it's a big massive impact on the, the whole change of me really.

Colin, like Bill, suffered from his experience of homelessness. Specifically, he confided that he had long periods of depression and despondency, and was forever battling the issue of alcoholism. His personal narrative was that of a man who suffered both mentally and physically within his life as a result of his homelessness. One aspect of this testimony that is telling here was his hands, which he describes as follows: There is "pain in both my hands and feet, which I thought it was arthritis and it was, it was bad" (Colin). His teacher breaks this narrative via the simple suggestion that he tries the bass. This becomes a positive interaction with another through which a whole new story begins.

From these positive interactions with another both Bill and Colin were able to improve themselves. However this was not a universal occurrence amongst the participants. For several this kind of transformation was elusive, with their lives seemingly stuck in their circumstance of homelessness, lives that had the more pressing concerns of keeping warm, safe and fed. A poignant example of this was Tony, the only participant who was still sleeping rough during the course of the interviews, and who seemed to have more pressing issues than his personal growth. Instead, he lived each day as best he

could, resigned to his fate although his life was not simply bleak. An example that sums this up was that when I asked if he gets food that is thrown out behind the supermarkets he said:

> Nah, I don't need to do that, but. Uh, so I've got- I've got all me tent stuff. Those were the things... I've got me £5 pounds. Uh ... If you used the littles ... You got all the shops. You get tender stew for a pound. So, you got your stew. You got potatoes here. And you can make a pot. If you want to put a bit of curry powder or whatever ... You've got yourself a curry. And the bread. Real I am. And this is it, 40 pence. I can't understand it, because that's little [cheap]. They're cheap bread. It's okay. Why won't you have this, because nothing's free, ey. The cheap bread. A week later they're still good. I go, "I can't wait that long." I have this and all that. They're the big breads.

Tony's simple story is not about self-improvement, but instead is a vivid and possibly more poignant example of the struggle that some homeless people experience. It is homelessness where any opportunity and inclination to improve runs up against the hard reality of daily existence. This is a reality for Tony which equals getting enough food to not just eat but to enjoy, where the bargain of 40 pence bread brings its own sense of success. His example shows that the kind of self-improvement or growth experienced by Bill and Colin is not a foregone conclusion, where in fact many people who are homeless do not have the opportunity to narrate new positive stories about their lives. Instead, the opportunity for self-improvement was like a vein of hope and deliverance for some, but also something that remained silent, hidden, elusive, and was possibly unnecessary for others. Under the right circumstance it could be ignited through the body, where fingers previously abandoned could hold a chord or where the hands drumming a rhythm on a bongo could unlock a deeper passion. It could also be encouraged and drawn out by a sensitive teacher or a medical student who genuinely shows interest in that person. However, for most of the participants of this study, and one might suggest for most people who are homeless, opportunities for self-improvement do not take place, and it is arguably a phenomenon which remains a rarity.

When opportunities for self-improvement arise it can be transformational, providing respite and hope in the land of the weary that many of the participants and the wider population of homeless people experience. It was for some of the participants "a turning point, an opening and an opportunity for new

development" (Jacobsen, 2006, p.39). It manifested in the body through alleviation of the pain and suffering of the experience of homelessness. It was felt physically, being tangible and welcome. It was also a phenomenon of intersubjectivity, created through interactions with others, where new narratives could be written and re-configuration enabled. However, significantly, it was a phenomenon of the temporal world, in cases only momentary and for some not sustained. It was something caught in and passing across time; a phenomenon given life to by the death of a past, by the movement of a spirit darkened and hurt by events to something brighter and more optimistic. Van Manen captures this sense well when he says, "as I make something of myself I reinterpret who I once was or who I now am" (1990, p.104). The phenomenon of self-improvement, born as it was from the lives of people who were homeless, was profound and touching. It seemed that this was a phenomenon with the potential for individuals who are homeless to "find meaning in life even when confronted with [their potentially] hopeless situation" (Frankl, 1954, p.116), and it enabled them to narrate a new and better future that provided solace from the difficulties of being homeless.

Chapter 5 - Findings - The World of People and Places

In this chapter the relational world of the participants - that intersubjective and spatial experience between them, others and places - is examined. The first phenomenon considered is friendship, and its avoidance amongst people who are homeless.

5.1 Avoidance of Friendship with Other Homeless People

> Nobody likes being alone that much. I don't go out of my way to make friends, that's all. It just leads to disappointment.
>
> Murakami, [2000] 2003

Friendship is such a normal part of our life that those of us with a strong network of friends may hardly pay it any attention. Our thoughts tend to focus on 'doing friendship', being with, or planning time with friends. Friendship is simply something that many of us take for granted. However during the course of interviews with the participants it became increasingly obvious that avoiding friendship, specifically with other homeless people, was something of major concern to many of the participants. This avoidance was often considered and important to the participant, as exemplified by Jonathan:

> [I] didn't have anything to do with anybody if I could avoid it.

Jonathan avoids any opportunity for friendship to happen, going out of his way to 'avoid' others, which in this example was the other homeless residents at the hostel where he lived. This reaction to the possibility of friendship is perhaps surprising when we consider that it is generally viewed as something positive and a highly valued form of relationship. Friendship is however not something that Jonathan wants with those he lives with.

Given the enthusiasm that most people greet friendship with it is intriguing that its avoidance appeared so frequently in this study, finding its place most vividly inside the walls of homeless hostels where several

of the participants lived or had lived. These are places where people come to stay, offering respite from sleeping rough, losing one's home or, in some cases, a place to stay straight after leaving prison. The very nature of hostel life means it is hard to avoid others inside them, as one's peer group is literally everywhere. They are places mainly consisting of men, diverse in age, ethnicity and background, but all experiencing some level of personal deprivation and poverty.

Finding ways to avoid others and the possibility of forming friendships shaped the personal experience of hostel life for many of the participants in this study. Their experiences of doing this were generally sad and distressing, with participants choosing to physically and emotionally isolate themselves from the immediate society they inhabited. An illustrative example of this comes from Frank, who recalls how he circumvents and avoids others while in the hostel. He says:

> And I'll, I'll stop in the room and I won't come out of the room. So, I'm in there about 3, 4 [hours] in the afternoon, [till] 'round about dinner. I don't come out. I just sit with my radio, I might pop downstairs. But apart from that I would, I'm upstairs in my room. Listening to the radio.

This description provides an image of a man locked behind his room door, alone, listening to his radio, isolating himself from those around him. This avoidance of others is a clear example of how many of the participants dealt with living in a hostel. This avoidance may seem rather strange given that hostels are places full of people sharing similar circumstances and activities such as mealtimes. However, it seems that they can also be places toxic to intimacy, bonding and friendship, as expressed clearly in the following:

> I've learned, I've been in a 'hostel' environment just over 12 months now. I've learned that relationships don't work in hostels. Friendship can't work… (Bill)

This reaction to hostel life, the avoidance of friendship, is an individual act, undertaken alone. It involves removing oneself, either physically or metaphorically, from contact with another. However, although the denial of friendship may suggest a sense of victimhood, where the individual seems to be hurting themselves via their isolation, it is conversely also an experience of personal agency, where the individual

wields some power over their circumstances. The manner and intensity of this control were diverse and varied across this study, with Frank's self-imposed solitude in his room the most literal, while others took control of their situations with more confidence and self-reflection. For example:

> Because um, we are in all, in all the same situation. But once you start getting too close to someone, you don't know them um, it's all a big charade in the hostel world it's ... Not cliquey but it can end in tears… Yeah, I'm picking and choosing, I'm picking and choosing who I speak to now. (Bill)

Here Bill explains how friendship may develop through the physical closeness of living in a hostel, something that if not held in check may ultimately lead to problems and 'tears'. He is careful about who he associates with and who he spends time with. It is a description of not just the people who live in a homeless hostel but also the kind of places they can be. Jonathan explains this as follows:

> I found a lot of people knew each other, and I didn't know anybody… [And] I found, um, a little bit dodgy…They weren't acting as crooks, but they were not averse to a bit of dealing on the side, soft drugs, illegal alcohol, things like that. A bit of shoplifting… A bit of a culture shock, really.

For Jonathan not only did he feel alone in the place, but he was also shocked by the kinds of people who were there and the behaviour they undertook. Much has been written about the toxicity of hostels, with many authors drawing attention to the violence, crime and its often dehumanising aspect. Wasserman and Clair's (2010) research provides a clear account of homeless shelters in the USA, showing how intolerable shelters can be to the individual, with undercurrents of violence, intimidation and general suspicion rampant and unbridled. This aspect of violence in hostels resonates strongly with the experiences of the participants in this study, where it was often pervasive, shaping and influencing the desire to avoid friendship. When Jonathan began to be exposed to this aspect of hostel life he treated it with a level of incredulity, shock and confusion:

> I had an argument with a guy. He was a pretty violent bloke actually. He got a nasty reputation, and he said something to me. I was filling out a form … And he said something and I just made

> some throw-away remark and the next thing I know, he's threatening me with a pole key. But the gist ... The gist of it was, "You think you're better than the rest of us. You know yeah?" I thought, "Hang on. I don't think that applies, because I am in here," so like we are in the same boat…

The speed in escalation to violence is also surprising, suggesting an unseen level of anxiety or tension existing in the hostel that facilitates such a reaction. Wasserman and Clair experienced this tension for themselves, commenting that "our stress levels already were high, and we had not even checked in" to the hostel (2010, p.63). This undercurrent of violence manifested as an inter-relational phenomenon, something existing between the residents. Petrovich and Cronley (2015) uncovered similar issues in their research into homeless shelters, adding weight to the argument that such places may prevent, or at least discourage, intimacy and friendship.

However, even with this threat of violence many participants did not surrender to their strategy of isolation, often making repeated attempts to integrate into and participate in the social world of their hostel. Even so, again and again the threat of confrontation and violence came back to thwart their efforts and further cement their position of avoidance. For example, even with the most innocuous of activities things can quickly change in a hostel:

> And he gets worse... They got the table tennis out yesterday to go do. I don't- I don't just ... Happen the ball, happened to go underneath his chair. And I asked... All I asked him to do was to move so that he could get his damn chair. He just got up and started mouthing to the staff about it. I said there it is, you can sit down now, we've got the - ball. And you know what they said? He's an eighty-five-year-old and he swears off it. I don't care about the language. (Frank)

A simple game of ping pong escalates suddenly as a ball goes astray, a benign activity turning sour in a moment, with confrontation and the potential for violence bubbling up. However, with exceptions, the possibility of violence described by the participants never fully materialised, remaining instead as a threat hanging in the air. As Frank says:

> There's no violence. There's threats of violence. Not actual violence, I mean they would never dare do that. They know they wouldn't, but it's the people stare at you as if you're weird...

The confrontational nature of life in a hostel provides both the reason and context for the avoidance of friendship. They seemed to be places where a misconstrued word or an unapologetic look could create an outburst and the threat of violence, with the withdrawal of contact and the avoidance of friendship by the participant being a reasonable reaction to this.

This phenomenon of friendship avoidance can then shift and turn from the social world to something much more inward looking, more personal and embodied. This is viscerally illustrated in James's story of hostel life:

> Yeah, yeah, and uh and if two weeks went by without a fight, then it was a good two weeks… But you have to worry about your roof over your head and at the same time you have to take a load of shit. From idiots that are around you and there is nothing you can do about it… So, you have to bite your bottom lip a lot and…

Through avoidance of friendship the wrath of others is dodged as James holds his reaction by biting down onto his lip. It is friendship avoidance literally felt in his body. For James and the others living in a hostel meant being careful about how they interacted with others, with friendship being avoided or treated with care. The next element of this phenomenon of friendship avoidance to consider is what happens outside the hotel.

A favourite place for many of the participants in the study was a local drop-in centre, where they could hang out, eat breakfast and lunch, and spend a few hours in the morning. Only one participant in this study totally avoided the place through fear of being brought back into the world of legal highs, which he felt he would be exposed to by some of the people there. For the others in the study the drop-in centre was approached with a much more positive attitude than were the hostels, where there was the possibility of forming relationships with others and entering a more social world. However, even in the possibly more benign setting of the drop-in centre, friendship was still kept at arm's length, as if some

unwritten rule existed, where boundaries were clear and not transgressed. This is illustrated in Jonathan's description of the place:

> I feel, sort of... comfortable here. Simply, because people don't insist on getting to know you. Everybody's a little bit stand-off-ish. Because, everybody's got a few problems they don't want to talk about, or they want to talk about privately, or whatever. So, it's a nice, sort of, easy going most of the time.

A place comfortable and easy going, but where friendship is still not taken or given, as Colin explains:

> I've just… I just like people, um, uh, as acquaintances now.

Friendship is replaced by acquaintanceship, a relationship that is more casual. In the less threatening environment of the drop-in centre, over-familiarity with others is still withheld, the participants unwilling to form friendships with their peers. Here though, unlike in the hostel, the reason for this has less to do with physical violence and is more a product of the fear of the effect it might have on one's attitude, a fear of becoming influenced by the negativity of others. This is clearly expressed by Bill:

> Yeah, I'm picking and choosing, I'm picking and choosing who I speak to now. Um, because my frame of mind's more positive myself now. Um, and I've learned that if you, if you, socialize with negative ... Negativity in your life um, and you talk to negative people you won't get on in life. You won't get on, that'll drag you down. You've got to ... Do it yourself but if you surround yourself in a positive attitude and positive thinking, positive people, that hopefully should balance off...

Although the reason for avoiding friendship appears different from the hostel its core seems to be the same. It is an act of self-protection, the preservation of one's well-being, in this case from the perceived pessimism and depression of others. It appears that 'these others' "can get you down easily" (Bill). This is the same reason for Brian avoiding the drop-in centre, fearing being drawn back into the world of drugs and the life he came from. For those in the drop-in centre they avoided friendship to prevent

being infected by the depression and negativity of others, something that could take them back to their previous lives of problems and issues.

To conclude this section, it is clear that for the participants avoiding friendship with other homeless people was an important aspect of their lives. It was something enlivened in their intersubjective world, born of the need to protect themselves and also to avoid a return to a dark past. It is a phenomenon where both body and soul are defended from others. It begins in the social world, moving into something personal and embodied. It is also a phenomenon where friendship is avoided as a choice, as a personal strategy to avoid intimacy with peers and other people experiencing homelessness, addiction and poverty. It is a phenomenon of self-preservation.

5.2 Friendship and Relationships with Non-Homeless People

Everybody touches you whether you realise it or not.

Brian

Over the course of the study it became increasingly obvious that developing relationships and integrating with others, specifically those beyond the peer group of other homeless people, was an important part of the participants' lives. This section will explore this and begins with Frank's efforts to summon the courage to talk to a woman he likes.

Frank's desire for intimacy with others was an important part of his life, as illustrated when replying to a question about the kind of life he would like. He said:

> Obviously, [a life with] a girlfriend. I would, I've got ... I've been eyeing somebody up at the choir, but I'm too shy to, to find out if she's got anybody or not. You know, just to talk to her last night, I didn't actually say um, how I felt. You know, because I don't know. Everybody does it. It's two males and it's two females or it's you know. Everybody wants it. I like relationships, don't get me wrong. I've had prostitutes. I've had shoplifters. I've been with ... a shoplifter. It's, it's easy

to get a relationship. It's hard to keep it down. You keep seeing them get that person that you want to be with.

Frank's desire and hesitation about talking to the woman he is attracted to is clear. He struggles to muster the courage to talk to someone he fancies, finding it difficult to overcome his shyness. There is some objectification of women in his language, although this may also be due to his awkwardness in communicating as a result of his learning difficulties. With respect to this woman he is "too shy," which prevents him initiating a conversation despite his desire to have a "girlfriend."

This desire for a girlfriend is just one aspect of a world that he misses. For example talking about losing his parents and friends he had, he says:

I miss them all, I went down [to my local pub] last time. Was it November? And there was nobody in the pub... Paddy wasn't in there, Patrick wasn't in, so obviously, they've gone, they've either gone to Ireland. (Frank)

He is a man who misses his parents and old friends, and who spends some of his time working on developing meaningful relationships, which are often with those outside his peer group. For example he gets friendly with some women at his local pub, going so far as to accompany them on a shoplifting excursion:

Yeah, Jade, Jessica, Lisa, I don't like her. I mean they're shoplifters and I'll go, I'll... They are all shoplifters in the pub, they are having to work there, sometimes. Yeah. Well they have to get somehow, get things cheaper. I've done it, I've shoplifted. I've gone out with a shoplifter, bloody sister, but it's all in the past. Yeah. But I got a McDonalds for it. I mean she's go in ah, don't tell the family and as soon as she's walked out the door, they all know where we're going. And I don't agree with it, but... (Frank)

Frank shoplifts, even getting paid with a meal at McDonalds, but he does not agree with it. He goes along with this illegal activity so that he can join in the world of these women. His search for female intimacy,

for friendship with others, means he is prepared to over step his own moral boundaries. He continues and becomes sad when he talks about his current circumstances and the isolation he feels, saying:

> Didn't think I would get to a stage like this but have. (Frank)

Frank's failure to find a relationship and move beyond his loneliness dominated many of the conversations we had. It was coupled with his desire to move out of his hostel and find a new happier life he could share with someone. This kind of desire is something that is quite common in the literature on homelessness, usually framed as a pathway out of homelessness through developing "positive social networks" (McNaughton, 2008, p.153). Typically this refers to rebuilding family or gaining professional support. In Frank's case this is much more straightforward and is focussed purely on finding a female friend to share his life with. An example that better illustrates McNaughton's point above is Bill's story and how he makes a conscious effort to widen his social network as part of his own pathway out of homelessness. Bill's story begins with him starting to regain some control of his drinking and coming to terms with his descent into homelessness, and then thinking about how he will recover the world he lost. He sees clearly that the company he is forced to keep in the hostel and at the drop-in centre is not helping him move forward, saying:

> [I] still stay in that pond because that's the life I'm in at the moment.

Bill is stuck in a "pond" of other homeless people who are not helping, and may even be hindering, his efforts to move forward. Donley and Wright (2012) found something similar in their study, where for example one homeless person trying to change his life of addiction was keen to "remove himself from what he viewed as a toxic environment (of other homeless people with addiction)" (Donley and Wright, 2012, p.296). Certainly, for Bill, he wants to be part of a "different community, a different social circle" (Bill). He is a man in search of new friendships and understands that to change his newly acquired identity as someone who is homeless he needs to move away from his present peer group. He is a man who appreciates that his social world affects his attitude and outlook, and therefore he wants to build new relationships beyond his present peer group.

At the time of interviewing Bill had not been successful in his efforts to grow his social network beyond his peers, but other participants were more successful. An example here is Brian and his relationships with women. Brian's tale begins with his relationship with a close female friend, a woman who comes in and out of his life frequently. It is friendship that he makes a point to mention is platonic, describing it as follows:

> Um, everybody thinks I want to shag her. She's not, she's my best friend… She is basically my best mate, I've known her for years. I like her because she is direct. She's forward and I like that. I'm glad she is back in my life. (Brian).

Brian's relationship with his friend is important to him. He spends much of his time looking out for her, because she is "part of [his] life, a good mate" (Brian). He shares his time with her, doing the stuff that friends do. For example, he talks with fondness about visiting a park together:

> Yeah, it's got a lake where there they've got boats and they've got various birds and stuff. We went down, we used to go there fairly regular cause they've got allotments that way. And Natalie used to have an allotment on there, but, she was struggling with finances so she gave it up, But, um, we took some bird seed down and fed the, fed the geese and the, um, various other bits and pieces but I wanted to focus on that cause it's a nice little sculpture, it's like a wicker, um, egg. (Brian).

This is Brian having a relationship with someone outside his peer group. It is nothing unusual or different from other relationships people have, an everyday occurrence for many, but it is a world apart from most of the other participants in this study. It is Brian enjoying a social world outside his peer group, where he has moved beyond them. He may not have moved fully back into the world he left when he was employed and owned a house, but his social world is separate, different and seemingly out of reach for some of the other participants. He has a social world where he can not only enjoy a visit to the park but can do this with someone who is not homeless.

Brian's other relationships with women are also unextraordinary but starkly different from the other participants in this study. He has confidence with women outside his peer group, with women who have

jobs, homes and money. He is a man on the look-out for an opportunity to date a woman, confident and without consideration of the different worlds they exist in. He says:

> I'm forward with anyone. I'm, I fancy one and if I see she's not interested I move on to the next one, you know what I mean? But it's like yeah, um, I mean one of the lass's here, you've probably seen her. We walked past that way at reception. Susan her name was. You've probably seen her. She's not working here now. She's somewhere else but I've been trying to get her number. She's got my number so I'm going to try and link up with her. But she's fit as fuck. (Brian)

Brian is full of bravado, his desire for Susan is clear and obvious, but equally, he is not overly concerned with success. This seems to be just a normal experience for Brian, where when he sees a woman he fancies he asks them out. Unlike the others in his peer group Brian is not captured or restricted by his context. He does not seem to have been limited or curtailed as a man through being homeless. He still has confidence and it seems he can move with some ease across social, economic and circumstantial divides when it comes to women. His experience, although unusual in this study, was not the only such example. One other participant, Ryan, was also able to cross the divide that seemed to separate homeless people from the homed. Ryan had been in several long-term relationships and is presently seeing a woman who is planning to go to university. He says:

> Well, I am seeing somebody, but it is a bit difficult because she's working away…[and] I think my feeling towards her are a bit stronger than hers for me…

Again, there is nothing extraordinary about this, it is just a tale of two people seeing each other. However, both Brian and Ryan are doing something different from the other participants, they are having relationships outside their peer group. They are not dating other homeless people; their social world seems wider and more diverse than some of the other participants. The barriers that may be preventing Frank or Bill from success in moving beyond their peers do not seem to be there for Brian or Ryan, at least not to the same extent. They are not trying to widen their social network, as they have already achieved some success in this. Instead, their effort is focussed on managing these relationships.

There was one final kind of relationship, outside those with their peers, that was important to the participants. These were those relationships the participants were able to form with professionals or other support workers. Many of the participants had the opportunity to discuss their situation with a professional or volunteer support worker at the drop-in centre. A good example of how this was experienced came from Jonathan, who describes the benefit of this as follows:

> Three ladies who've taken over the work club do, do support roles and, um, it's very reassuring to know if I do want to talk to somebody, I've just got to sort of go "Excuse me, you know, so and so, can I have ten minutes?" And they're there. That sort of thing helps you quite a lot. Having... Having... Having somebody there really makes a difference so that you feel like it's a real sort of a… Because I've always had difficulty talking to people anyway.

There seems little that is remarkable about the above commentary, where Jonathan seems simply to be explaining how good it is to have somebody to off-load to. However, below the surface it appears that this is more than a casual statement, as for Jonathan there is something significant and important in having someone he can trust to talk to, someone who is "there" for him. Being able to have a person beyond his peer group who will listen and empathise with him seems to make a difference to him. These relationships are important to him, providing an outlet for his feelings and support. He was not alone in finding succour in this external support network, as others also sought out and benefitted from this kind of relationship. Bill provided a clear example of this during his conversation about how often he gets to see a support worker, stating:

> Quite a bit, yeah, I see him every Monday. He comes here Saturday and every Monday. And he's always down at the drop-in centre, um, so if you've got any worries or concerns or advice, you can go to see him. Um, and also Sally um, because that's ... Like, I talk to her about a lot of the um, not personal things but a lot of my um, my percussion ambitions and stuff so she's trying to guide me in that way. So, she's a big, she's a big part of my life because um, she's trying to help me follow what I want to do.

For Bill these are relationships that matter. Like Jonathan's they are not equal or fully reciprocal, but they do provide Bill with support, something that is missing in his life, they are welcome and they require

little effort. They may not provide a clear pathway out of homelessness for him, but they do seem to provide sustenance and respite from it. For Jonathan, stricken with loneliness, who said "when I was young, I never had anybody that I could really talk to apart from this one uncle who died (when I was still young)", they are much needed. A final example of this kind of relationship is Colin's experience with his music teacher:

> And he's that kind of person who, like, encourages you. When I bought that, on the day that I bought the clarinet, I took it round to the studio and showed him.

Colin's enthusiasm in wanting to show his new clarinet to his teacher is clear. He is excited and ready to share with his teacher the experience of joy in buying a clarinet. This is what we do with people we feel close to. We spend time with them, show them our stuff and seek their recognition about who we are and what we hold dear. We do not know how Colin's teacher responded to Colin on this occasion, but across other interviews it was clear that his impact on Colin was positive and significant.

Relationships with others outside their peer group were a key element of the lifeworld of many of the participants, as explored in this section. The motivation for forming or trying to form relationships was varied, ranging from simply wanting to have a girlfriend to using them as a way out of homelessness. Those participants who had friends and partners outside their peer group seemed to be the most comfortable and adjusted to their circumstances. Finally, I examined some of the relationships the participants had with their teachers and support workers, which illustrated the need some had to discuss their circumstances and share some of the better moments with those who seemed interested in their life. Unlike in the previous section, which looked at how the participants shunned intimacy with their peer group, here we see the other side of their experience with relationships, one that illustrates how intimacy with others mattered to them and how hard it was for some to find this. Simone de Beauvoir ([1947] 2018) offers insight about the need for friendship with others and why this may have been so important for many of the participants. She says that we become more than a thing to the other, enabling the element of care and interest to blossom, creating the possibility of friendship and some kind of spiritual union, where "each one becomes irreplaceable" (Simone de Beauvoir, [1947] 2018, p.116) to the other. For the participants, having friends and those who care for them was something often missing from their lives, lost to them as they became homeless. When they were able to find it again, even in

small measures, it seemed to really make a difference to their lives. In the next section the relationship the participants had with the places they lived in or accessed is explored, starting first with their accommodation.

5.3 Relationships with Places

> And I sleep on the floor [of the woods], better than concrete. Because the kids are on the streets. Yeah, they're… They're sleeping on concrete which takes all the heat out of you.
>
> Ron

"Place is of particular importance in understanding homelessness… [they are a] group defined by their anomalous dwelling" (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p.159). In this section this relationship with place is examined, starting with how the participants think about their accommodation and home.

This section starts with the story of Bill, who in a very short period was evicted from his static caravan, lived in a shed in a churchyard, had a room in a shelter and then secured a small self-contained flat that was managed by the hostel he had lived in. Although not a permanent place he felt he finally had somewhere secure to live, a place where he could dwell, a place he enjoyed and was thankful for. He says, "it's fantastic. I am… you know" (Bill). The joy and gratitude of getting a place after being so low is not an unusual story amongst individuals passing through homelessness. It is neither extraordinary nor unique, it is a common tale, except of course for the individual, as for them it is something 'fantastic'. For others in this study getting a place beyond their hostel room remained out of reach, a dream of a distant happier place. This was certainly the case for James, who was constantly being evicted from hostels and saw no opportunity to escape this routine. He was caught on a conveyor belt of one hostel after another, stating:

> Yeah. But it's the same old crap. Same old situation. Different colour walls. There's no difference. Things still stay the same. (James)

A homeless hostel is not somewhere James wants to live, and his experience with them shows that "not every building is a dwelling" (Heidegger, 1951, p.347). For him there was no chance of feeling fantastic like Bill. This is the reality of living in a hostel, a circumstance that many of the participants were trying to escape from. It is something that Bill achieved by moving into a single occupancy apartment, which provided him with a level of independence and privacy. This gave him the opportunity to begin climbing back into the world, enabled by the very bricks and mortar of his apartment. He describes his flat as follows:

> Yeah, um well I've been there ooh, probably about 2 ... 2 months now, and again it's the next step up from the hostel. A 1-bedroom flat… completely self-sufficient, and I'll ... I'll t- one day I'll ... I'll sh- you haven't been to the flats, they're beautiful, absolute ... 1- bedroom flats, your own kitchen, bathroom, shower, I've got a ... Luckily, I'm on the backside overlooking the park, I've got a balcony. It's fantastic. I am ... You know, I've been blessed… (Bill)

Bill's flat is a catalyst for his joy and gratitude. It is a place of positive change and pleasure for him, but it is not a home. It is only "somewhere to sleep, and somewhere to eat and somewhere to relax… no I don't class it as a home" (Bill). It is not a place where Bill feels at home, which begs the question of what is missing here for him. What is stopping him feel it is home? Others in the study expressed similar sentiment about their flats. For example Brian illustrates this when he says:

> But it is not a home, basically it's a temporary accommodation.

For Heidegger "to dwell, [is] to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguard each thing in its essence" ([1971] 1975, p.149). Bill and Brian are not at peace in their flats, these are not really places to dwell or to live in for a long time. They are temporary places, places to sleep, to eat but not to dwell. For Bill and Brian they are 'not at home'. This is further compounded by the feeling that Bill has towards the place, of which he says;

> [I am] only here like a pass, pass, passing by. Passing by. I think I'll always feel that way to be honest.

Bill feels like he is just passing through and his accommodation is therefore not a home. Duyvendak (2011) suggests this is a common phenomenon, that we are all becoming unconnected and detached from the traditional notion of home. It certainly seems that for Bill and Brian they are unattached to their flats. Others in the study expressed a similar sentiment regarding their accommodation. Frank, who is still stuck in a hostel, having been there for over three years, exemplifies this by saying, "it is just a place to sleep". Nothing is clearer than Frank's statement here, showing that although his accommodation appears to offer some level of permanence for him his desire to move on is palpable. He says when talking about being stuck there that he is "very frustrated. Very angry" (Frank). For Frank and the others their accommodation seemed to be something temporary, a place that they were passing through, and this stopped them considering it a home.

Another element of how their accommodation was experienced was through its relationship with others. When discussing home several participants expressed that they felt homeless despite having somewhere to live as they had no one to share it with. Frank was explicit about this point, and replying to the question 'what makes a home?' he says:

> Being with friends… Being with people that are, are, that under… [understand you].

For Frank home exists where there are companions; it is a place to be with people who understand him. This sentiment came up in other interviews, with several participants making the point that home had been a place for them where they had lived with a loved one and their families. For example Ryan, when asked when he last felt at home, said that it was when he lived "with Karen" (Ryan) some fifteen years previously. Bill shared the same sentiment about feeling at home, saying:

> I class home as a family home, which obviously I used to have with my parents. I've never really had a home. I've always rented and I've always moved around, uh, so, I'm not, I have, I've, my memories of home are, is family, is parents and my brother… So no, I don't class where I live now as a home… I don't think ever, I ever will have a home.

Even Jonathan, who had been living in a flat for many years and regularly spends time with his mother a few streets away, felt that he would only be home "if I was sharing with somebody else". This is home

as constructed through the presence of others who care and understand us. Duyvendak (2011) alludes to this when he talks about home as fulfilling the need for "social…sustenance" (p.10). Certainly, several of the participants felt they were not home as they had no one they cared for to share their accommodation with. Romanyshyn and Whalen capture this as follows, "I felt as I always had - alone with no real home" (1987, p.200).

The final element of the relationship the participants had with their accommodation is why they were not striving to find a place to call home. Romanyshyn and Whalen (1987) suggest that we are all searching for our own Jerusalem, a place of belonging. Certainly for some of the participants, specifically if they lived in a hostel, they were keen to move on to something better. For others, especially those who had independent accommodation, there seemed to be a sense of ambivalence about their situation. They did not seem to be striving for a place to call home. For example when Ryan was asked about whether he missed having a place that felt like home, he replied:

> Yeah, yeah, I sort of, uh, yeah, I suppose I do, yeah. Um, I don't know really, I never really thought about it.

There is little in the sense of drive or desire for Ryan to have a place to call home. He is okay with his circumstances and any powerful emotions that he may have had with respect to having a home are replaced by a simpler desire to have better accommodation where he does not need to share with others,. He says:

> Yeah, I would like the sort of place on my own board, you know, stuff. (Ryan)

His desire for a home seems neither strong nor overwhelming. He has a level of detachment from the notion of home, as if the concept has become unimportant to him. The reasons for Ryan's ambivalence are unclear, but his lack of desire or need to find a home is undeniable and something shared by others in the study. For example when Jonathan talks about what a home is he says:

> A house isn't just a roof over your head. A home is somewhere that you want to go back to, there's people there that you want to be with, you can feel safe, relaxed" [And you just go home to an empty flat or house?] Yeah.

Jonathan provides a clear picture of what a home means to him, which is a place that you want to return to, where you are safe and at peace. However, his place is not that kind of dwelling, as to him it is empty, not a home, somewhere to live but not dwell, despite him having been there for 17 years. He is not 'at home' but there is little in the way of a desire to find a new one as he, like Ryan above, is comfortable enough where he lives. Brian offers a philosophical take on 'being home' when he says it is, "a mental state", and continues,

> It is up here (points to his head). It's how you are up here, um… and I think, if you've got like a peace mentally, it, you could be anywhere. Do you know what I mean? If you, if you're stable within yourself… it doesn't matter where you are because you're stable.

Brian describes being at home as something in his head, somewhere where he feels at peace and comfortable. He continues this theme saying:

> Well, yeah, if you haven't got that, if you've got, if you're not mentally stable or whatever, um, and you've got the best place in the world. It doesn't matter because it doesn't feel like home or it's just another place. (Brian)

For Brian home is something that exists first and foremost in one's head; it is home carried in the heart. Romanyshyn and Whalen (1987), although making a different point, capture this meaning when they say that home is not so much a literal or material thing but instead a sense of being in the world, connected to the earth. It is "a way of making the world into a home that transforms and preserves the world" (Romanyshyn and Whalen, 1987, p.241). For Brian home is something created and held within the mind, with this being not just an idea but actually how he experienced the world. He had been made homeless several times, including having his home repossessed, leaving another home to his estranged wife, and much more. During the course of this study he was living in a flat and says:

> I was in a hostel in Liverpool (town name changed), I didn't really like and it's hasn't really got a very good rating but, um, you had to be in for a certain time, you couldn't smoke in your room you couldn't do this, you couldn't have guests and this, that and the other. So, having just that front door (in his present accommodation), that I can come in, shut behind and lock and do whatever the… whatever I want in there, is beneficial… (Brian)

His flat is a step up from his hostel but that is all it is. It had better facilities, "with all mod cons", more freedom, but nothing more than an upgrade. For Brian it did not really matter, as "it is just a place to stay", which brings us back to the sense of ambivalence felt by others about their accommodation.

In this first half of this section the relationship the participants had with their accommodation and how this related to having a home has been explored. Several themes were identified as being part of this experience; the first of these was their accommodation as something temporary, as if they were simply passing through, and thereby not something they could consider a home. The second theme was how not having someone close to share their accommodation with stopped many of the participants from seeing this as a home. The last theme concerned the feeling of ambivalence that many had to the concept of home, where several of the participants simply did not seem to care a great deal that their accommodation did not feel like a home.

Most of the participants had somewhere they lived, several even had flats or apartments, but none of them seemed to see their accommodation as constituting a home. Although those stuck in hostels were keen to move out into something better those who already had somewhere better showed little concern about turning their accommodation into a home. The relationship the participants had with their accommodation was complex and subtle, showing that home for them was not simply a question of having somewhere to stay. They were experiencing a level of homelessness, and for some this really did not seem to matter.

Next we turn our attention to the places that were not homes or accommodation but were important in the lives of the participants. With some exceptions nearly all the participants attended the same drop-in centre on a regular basis. The centre is a 5-day a week, morning only venue for anyone to have a free breakfast and as many cups of tea or coffee as they want, to take a shower and to have lunch. It is neither

unique nor exceptional in the world of voluntary provision to help individuals suffering forms of deprivation, addiction and homelessness. It is a place that many of the participants enjoy and spend considerable time in. Jonathan describes this place in the following terms:

> Most of my social life actually does revolve 'round, um, this place.

It is a place that is a centre, a focus for Jonathan's social life, where he can meet and interact with others. But there is more here as it is also a place of positive social interaction for Jonathan, where he can enjoy being social with others. For Jonathan, cut off from much of the world through poverty, unemployment and living alone in Council provided accommodation, having a place where he can return back to the social world is meaningful for him. It is a place where, "you got people you can to talk to as well as the staff… you've got people who understand" (Jonathan).

This experience was not limited to Jonathan, as others in the group expressed a similar sentiment. For example when Frank was asked about what the centre meant to him he said:

> It's friendship… [and it means] everything. It means that much.

The centre is a place of companionship, a place more than just some rickety seats and tepid tea, where groups of men and a few women can sit around metal tables, eating toast and jam, waiting for a hot lunch and sharing some time together. It is a place, for a few hours, where Jonathan and Frank can be in the company of people they choose to be with. It is a place of meaning they have created from their experience and interactions. For Jonathan and Frank the drop-in centre became a place to look forward to coming to, a place where companionship could exist for them. Unlike earlier in this chapter where the participants avoided friendship with other homeless men in the drop-in centre, there did seem to be a level of consensual companionship between them. The reason for this is unclear, but it seems to have been something created by the nature of the place, including its relatively benign culture, where the opportunity to cause harm or distress to others was limited. However, although this companionship between some of the participants existed in this place, on the whole it did appear to be much shallower than the relationships they had with the staff and volunteers. Ryan illustrates this when he discusses the experience of this place saying, "it's more of a family. It's not just a drop-in centre it's like a family". Here

he is specifically talking about the access to staff and support workers who work or volunteer their time at the drop-in centre, teaching and working with the clients. It is a place where Ryan can talk and be listened to, not just by his peers but, importantly for him, also by the staff, a place providing something akin to a family for him.

Jonathan, Frank and Ryan locate meaning and identity within this place. It has become, as Lukermann (1964) describes, a place of 'beliefs' for them, somewhere that becomes characterised by their thoughts and opinions. Hodgetts et al. (2010) examine at some length place-based identities for homeless people, showing how "a person's sense of self both leaks into and out from the places they inhabit" (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p.286). This certainly happened for Jonathan, Frank and Ryan with respect to the drop-in centre, making it an 'important place' for them.

Another example of a place that was important for the participants was the town or city they lived in, a place that many strongly identified with. For example, Jonathan expressed this when he said:

> Yes, I just realized something I really do love this city… [There are] the canals. I frequently take shortcuts along the canals rather than around the roads… Well it's, you, you're there on a dual carriageway surrounded by traffic, buses, noise, and everything. You just dodge down the car park, under the bridge, you're in a different world. It's peaceful, and apart from the occasional…, you, you get people jogging to work, cyclists, and everybody's just out enjoying themselves. And if you get a nice, quiet spot ... Well, haven't seen it recently, there was, um, a heron right off the terrace oriel, or not. I kept seeing this thing on, on the way out. They're really tame as well.

Jonathan loves the city and when he talks about his city it is as a breaking realisation, full of nostalgia and sentiment. The city away from the hustle and bustle becomes a sanctuary, a quiet place, somewhere he loves to be, a place he identifies with and also a place that identifies him. Others in the study also spoke about the city as a place of significance and meaning for them. For example Ryan says:

> Yeah well, I'm quite proud about coming from Liverpool (town name changed). You know, it's not the most important thing.

Again, we have pride, sentiment and attachment towards a city, not completely, not without some hesitation, but it is still here. Ryan is from Liverpool (town name changed) and this is who he is, a Liverpool man. His town is significant for him and is something he identifies with. This meaning surrounding a place was also experienced by others in the study. For example when Frank was asked about whether Liverpool (town name changed) was his home, he says: "Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it's my home. I just don't want to be where I am at the moment..." Like Ryan he is attached to the city and, despite his struggles with his hostel accommodation, he is able to relate to and see the city as his home. He, like Jonathan and Ryan, has a city identity, an attachment to a place beyond himself.

The final important 'place' for some of the participants were places that were locations for escape, places where the individual could imagine, dream or step away from the world. There were several places that provided this 'escape' for the participants and one of the most prominent of these were libraries. Libraries mean many things and feature in the lives of people in numerous ways and this was the same for the participants of this study. One element of libraries that was revealing was how they were places where they could escape their circumstances, both physical and mental, even if just for a brief instance, a place to take them to a new imaginary world. Mervin describes this in the following way:

> It's a gateway. It's a pathway to many worlds… There are books and things and films, just pathways to many worlds around.

The library becomes a door for Mervin to a different world, a world in his head created by the stories he reads, held in place by the walls and shelves of the building. The library and the books it holds are no longer simply a building but instead something that takes him to another place. Others in the study also discussed the library, but with a little less enthusiasm than Mervin. For example Ryan says;

> Um, well, actually I just go to the library and read mainly sport and all sort of things like that… It's just wasted a couple of hour away… you know, uh, I don't like being on my own. So, I can't sit at home on my too.

A library is not a place of existential escape for Ryan, but it is still somewhere to read and kill time. For both Mervin and Ryan the library is an important place in their lives. They, like many others in this study,

spend considerable time there. Hodgetts et al. (2010) found in their research into homelessness that libraries can offer "opportunities for homeless people to spend the day unnoticed" (p.935) and "respite from homelessness" (p.941). For the participants in this study it is a place of more than just books and shelves, existing in the spatial world; it is a place where time can be spent and imaginations can wander.

If the library provides Mervin and Ryan with a level of escape, for Tony it is the woods, the place where he lives, that provides an important place away from the issues of hostel life or sleeping rough on the streets of Liverpool (town name changed). Explaining why he left a hostel, Tony says:

> Yes, and that's why? Because all me stuff is getting stolen, and uh… I go, and well… well [I'll] sleep rough. And the parks are a bit too dodgy, because it's getting… And I've got at all the woods. So, I got into the woods, and I go, yeah. I've got a sleeping bag. And, uh, you've got a bit, a bit damp or windy or whatever… And I slept on the floor (ground). Better than concrete.

The woods are a place where Tony can be free of the problems of life in a hostel, a place that is safer and more comfortable than the streets. It is a place that is apart from and beyond the other options available for him. It is a place offering security and protection, hidden away, something Donley and Wright (2012) also discovered in their research into homelessness and places. As libraries provide a place for Mervin and Ryan to escape their daily existence, the woods provide Tony with a way of escaping the problems of life in a hostel or rough sleeping in the city. The woods and the camp he made there also bring a sense of pride to Tony, differing from the other places discussed so far, as Tony has not only brought new meaning to the woods but has actively contributed to the construction of that meaning, seen here as his describes his life in the woods and the camp he has built:

> I've got… I've got a ringer bits (some kind of stove). I've got a cook on there. Uh, we had ... So, I mean, I was just pork chops last night. This is my place (the wood). And ... I just love it. Well, I helped a few people out, and, uh ... And I live in the woods. And, uh, a lot of us did, but they know you do that. And, uh ... As I said. Once, once you've got your plastic on the floor. Don't need a tent. You might, me have a tent. All you do. Boom. Then you put your felt ... The felt tipping down, which is about that big desk, as it got or double. That goes on. And then now with the sack you've got big plastic shades in. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you get newspaper. You sit

> with the newspapers, and ... And you'd finish and you know what? You got newspapers. You've got your fire again and again. So, you need newspapers to get the cardboard going, to get the slightly heavier wood, then you get a log. Which I'll get the logs. (Tony)

Tony is proud of his life in the woods. He is not surviving, barely eking out an existence, but he is nevertheless thriving. He can deal easily with the cold and the damp, cooking up hearty meals for himself and others. He is someone who can enjoy reading a newspaper and then can re-use it to light his fire. Tony, an ex-marine, is industrious and able to carve out an existence in a small area of woods away from prying eyes. It is a place "comfortable and free" (Donley and Wright, 2012, p.301). His camp is not only an important place but sounds more like a home than some of the examples at the beginning of this section.

In this section the participants' experiences of places were examined, uncovering the complex and nuanced relationship they had with their accommodation and those other places that they frequented. Even those who had secured some level of independent accommodation appeared to have little love or positive feeling towards it, being relatively ambivalent to it and to the wider prospect of securing something they might consider a home. This ambivalence was not there for those other places, such as the drop-in centre, libraries and parklands. These were not just spoken about in more positive terms, but became places they brought new meaning to, which become central and important parts of their lifeworlds. This section has shown that places can be an important and integral aspect of the lives of the participants, but their relationship with them is complex, sophisticated and not something primarily linked to having a home.

Chapter 6 - Findings - Types of Work, Dealing with Being Homeless, and the Struggle for Agency

In this chapter the themes of types of work, dealing with being homeless, and the struggle for agency are examined. These three themes stood out as aspects of the lifeworld of the participants that were prominent and important. First, the types of work the participants undertook is examined.

6.1 Types of Work

> A beggar, looked at realistically, is simply a businessman, getting his living, like other businessmen, in the way that comes to hand.
>
> Orwell, 1933

In this section the activities the participants spent their time working at, and more specifically those that seemed meaningful or required effort, will be focussed on.

6.1.1 Voluntary Work

Many of the participants undertook voluntary work, for example one type that was common across several participants was volunteering their time to help charities. The first example of this is Ryan and his voluntary work with CRISIS, the homelessness charity.

> Yeah, that's something I did last year [becoming an ambassador at CRISIS]. Well, I was just explaining what CRISIS represents. What they can offer. Um, we had uh, 4, 4, 4 or 5 introductions where we went to sort discuss how we sort of, um, uh, explain to other people what CRISIS represents and things like that. [I started] Because they want[ed] the ambassadors. So, I was just going 'round various organizations, uh, hostels, um, tried to do schools... You try and get to the youngsters before something actually happens. You see what I mean? So, I'm

> trying to get them to go to places where, okay people ain't homeless right, they have stable backgrounds, but just try to explain what could happen, if you see what I mean?

Being an ambassador at CRISIS is something that Ryan chooses to do, it is voluntarily work, done without expecting payment, him giving his time and effort to something he feels is important. It is also something that has meaning for him, as evidence when he says;

> It repre- well, it's given me more confidence. More self-belief. (Ryan)

His efforts to prevent others from falling into the world of addiction and homelessness provide him with some additional self-esteem, confidence and possibly meaning in his life. It is him voluntarily working, and applying effort and commitment, as a method of self-realisation (Grint and Nixon, 1991), brought to existence through Ryan's desire to pay back a debt he feels he owes CRISIS for helping him in the past.

Ryan was not the only person who undertook voluntary work. Jonathan was also keen to explain what work he did at the drop-in centre. Jonathan had been an IT manager many years previously but had been long-term unemployed despite intense efforts to secure a paid job. He spends a fair amount of his time at the drop-in centre where he began offering help to the others there. He talks about this as follows:

> Um, people write about, um, uh, excursions they've been on with CRISIS. [They take] art trips to various galleries around the Midlands… and people often write about that. Yeah, or if they just have, um, a day trip anywhere, somebody'll say, "Oh, can I write about this for the magazine?" and they'll just write it out and give it to me, and I'll check it over and type it up for them and… (Jonathan)

Jonathan continues, discussing the help he gives others with computers:

> Yeah, I'm just there. "Everything's all right?" "Yeah, fine," and if they suddenly sort of go "No, help!" "Yeah, all right," and I just go over and try to sort it out and if I can't, we know a lady who can. It's usually really stupid things like, um, forgetting the website address, or their password,

> or things like that cause they're not exactly, um ... They're computer literate but they're not used to using them every day, whereas I grew up with them.

This is easy for Jonathan, he is just helping others to write or do some IT. Like Ryan he is spending his time helping others. There is also some pride in his words, evidence of something returning after years of failure and despondency. He is now back again as the manager he was, helping others with their work, using skills he has for the benefit of people less able than himself. As for Ryan this type of work provides him with something constructive and meaningful in his life. Both men are utilising their experience to enable their voluntary work; for Jonathan his education and IT skills, for Ryan his gambling addiction and experience of homelessness. They are giving their energy for free, giving up their time in the service of others. They are happy to do this, as it brings them meaning and pleasure, it is an existential activity. It is something altruistic and charitable, where they give up their time, not for monetary gain, but for the sake of others. It is something done for some personal intrinsic reward rather than for income. This altruism, a desire to help others through one's effort, was not exclusive to Ryan and Jonathan. For example Bill shared his desire to work with animals and recounts his efforts to volunteer at an animal shelter:

> And, um, often if I could do something, I did when I first moved into the hostel I went to the dog's home to see if they wanted any volunteers and they said no they got enough and all that. Now I was going to go last week and visit the Animal Sanctuary. I'm thinking about ringing them up and asking them if they're looking for some volunteers just to help out, you know, just to have something else in my life, really.

Bill is keen to volunteer, to work for free with animals. He had already expressed his fondness for animals previously in our interviews, but this goes beyond merely a fondness for animals. He is making an effort, trying hard to find an opportunity to do some voluntary work becasue it brings him some sense of doing something of value. He strives, in vain and ultimately unsuccessfully, to give his time at an animal charity. As in Ryan and Jonathan's examples he wants to work, exchanging his time not for money but to "have something else" (Bill) in his life. That something else is the meaning that Jonathan and Ryan were finding in their work. For Bill this voluntary work would have been pleasurable, but more

importantly for a man who had hit rock bottom, it would have brought some new and deserved meaning back into his life.

A final example of voluntary work by the participants is the litter picking that several of them undertook, an activity taking place in the vicinity of the drop-in centre they frequented, Ryan describes the activity as follows:

> We're supposed to be going out in a group, right, we have certain set routes when we got, but, um, I'm one who sort of, I will pick it faster than most. I'll carry on. Whereas they're more of a sort of, how can I put it? They'll pick the rubbish up, it's a more leisurely thing. I mean I just, pick up the rubbish you know what I mean? I finish before everyone else is. My bag is full, they're still sort of. But, it's all right, you're supposed to stay together, you know what I mean, but it's good.

Ryan appears to enjoy this activity, taking some pride in the speed with which he accomplishes the task compared to his peers. It is something that Ryan cares about, something undertaken to earn some good will towards the drop-in centre from the surrounding neighbours. Jonathan discusses these reasons for the litter picking as follows:

> Because we get a lot … We get a lot of bad press and complaints from the neighbours. Um, I mean SIFA is an organization that was started to help people with alcohol problems… and we do have a lot of people. Uh, you see them just out drinking on the streets. And we're getting lots of complaints from the local tradesmen and businesses about empty bottles and cans being left lying around. Um, I don't think it was completely down to us. I can appreciate a few empty cider bottles from our lot, but when you see empty champagne bottles, I think it's more likely to be the nightclub on the main road. Um, so we've started doing these litter picks, 'bout a year ago, now, I think.

Both Ryan and Jonathan undertake litter picking because the reputation and therefore sustainability of the drop-in centre is at risk, an issue caused by the empty alcohol bottles in the vicinity that are blamed on the users of the centre. They litter pick to amend this situation, driven by their desire to support a place that, as I showed in the last chapter, they are very attached to.

Voluntary work for Ryan, Jonathan and Bill seems to be a meaning giving activity, fulfilling a personal need or obligation to do something for others. It is altruistic but also something accessible for them to do that provides a sense of value. It is them doing a type of work existing in the temporal sphere, where they give their time up for the needs of others.

6.1.2 Working at Art, Craft and Music

Several of the participants were heavily engaged with arts, crafts and music. It was an area of activity that received a great deal of attention and effort from them, filling significant parts of their week and providing welcome respite from their overall situation. We turn first to Colin and his immersion into the world of art.

Colin was one of the participants who spent much of his time doing crafts, writing and making music. His experience exemplifies that of many of the participants and is a good place to start looking at this area of activity. Discussing one of the new artistic activities he was taught at CRISIS, he says:

> Yeah, we've done the mask making as well. We put, uh, mud rock on the face. It's like plaster, you know, um, the bandage the plaster of Paris? It's like that. They have to use a load of Vaseline first [on your face]. Yeah, and you cannot breathe, like you know? And we put that on and smoothed it over and filled it and when that's dry and gone rock hard, we filled it with Plaster of Paris. (So, they take an impression of your face?). Yeah. That didn't work out because it was a little bit lopsided and the nose is all like too big and everything was completely wrong with it again. I says, I don't like this, so I started scratching away and cleaning it, cleaning it down, and, um, I got some of these metal hooks that look like the dentists use and I started scratching it and it worked out. It's like, um, it looks like, something like Quasimodo, that kind of face, so I painted it. (Colin)

There is - it seems - nothing unusual in this simple description of someone making a mask from paper and plaster. Colin is a person, someone well into middle age, focussing on the creation of a piece of art.

He is a man who frequently suffers serious and debilitating bouts of depression, someone caught in a perpetual cycle of drink and sobriety. However when he gets immersed in his art none of this is visible, as he becomes a man totally engaged in the process of artistic creation. He looks, observes and refines his sculpture, scraping away until an image emerges, revealing itself to him. There is no mention of time, as it passes unnoticed and without concern as he sculpts, caught up it seems in the activity. His reaction to this endeavour is revealing:

> It's great, cause I can talk about more of the good side now, because of the bad, dark, murky side that I was, that I have been in and now I'm struggling with the alcohol a little bit but I'm getting help with that and all these activities I'm doing, time and time again, I'll go back to it and I like it, I like it, because I'll meet the same people, have a laugh with the same people, and it's bringing out of like, a little bit out of the depression that I get into and it's really good. (Colin)

This act of creation, taking place in the midst of others, provides him with something beyond his present self, acting as is an opportunity to regain some self-esteem. He 'can talk' about something positive, have a laugh and enjoy the company of others through learning to make art. It is an act of meaning giving, providing Colin with a new and positive element to his life. For both Colin and many of the other participants these activities brought them pleasure, bringing something positive into their lives. These were activities that the participants worked hard at, expending effort, time and commitment over a sustained period.

Moorhouse (1987) offers some interesting insight about these craft and leisure hobbies that Colin and others pursued. He looks specifically at the Hot Rod subculture of the 1940s and 1950s and the sheer effort and personal industry the amateur Hot Rod builders put into their hobby. He sees these people as "carrying out in practice, of personally-chosen projects, not connected to paid labour; 'work' as hobby, as relaxation, as fascination, as something you really want to do rather than being forced to do. About feeling good by working hard" (1987, p. 256). Colin and Bill share much in common with Moorhouse's Hot Rod builders. They are amateurs too, they are also striving to achieve skill and mastery over their pursuits, putting in effort and commitment. It is also more than just a hobby or a piece of play for them. They work at their arts, crafts and music, such that it is a phenomenon of time spent on creating something new and meaningful, enabling them both to become something more than they were.

It is also a meaning giving exercise for them, like the Hot Rod builders, elevating it above a mere hobby, something sociologists might refer to as 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1982).

6.1.3 Working at Welfare

A final example of the types of work some of the participants undertook is also the most paradoxical. It concerns the efforts that the participants had to undertake to satisfy the various requirements necessary to receive their welfare payments. The Job Centre was a place that each participant had to attend, with some exceptions, twice monthly to prove they were actively looking for paid employment, so they could be deemed eligible to receive benefits. The purpose of a Job Centre is defined as follows: "Jobcentre Plus (the Job Centre) helps people move from benefits into work and helps employers advertise jobs. It also deals with benefits for people who are unemployed or unable to work because of a health condition or disability" (Gov.UK, 2020). It is a place to help people move from unemployment to employment, supporting them financially during this time. However, the way the participants treated the place was quite contrary to its purpose. For example, Brian talks about how the Job Centre made him sign on every day for 3 months, saying:

> I had to do a job search every single day and I had to show them the proof… I'd have to go to the joke shop (how Brian referred to the Job Centre) and sign-on, on a Wednesday and Thursday. Um, the late, the lasts one, so I think it was 4.50pm or something and the rest of the week it would various times. Um, and I just… I mean, I done it, um, but they're just, sort of…

Besides the inconvenience of going every day, Brian treats going there not as somewhere to help him find a job, but as a place of work, a place to be dealt with so that he can carry on with the rest of his life. Signing-on (formally applying for Job Seekers Allowance) and following the Job Centre process is a type of work for Brian, who says:

> Well. I'm signing on. That's a… That's a job. It's basically a job, isn't it? I'm getting paid to sign on and look for work, because it's an allowance. An allowance is a form of pay, isn't it?

It is ironic and revealing that the role of the Job Centre is so drastically changed, in that an individual with little power in relation to the authority of the Job Centre can change the meaning of it so profoundly. For Brian the identity of the Job Centre becomes something other than a place for him to find work, instead becoming his place of work. This experience was not isolated to Brian, with others in the study also seeing the process of proving that they were looking for work at the Job Centre as a type of work in itself. Jonathan provided an account of this as follows:

> It's like a human conveyor belt and any errors… No, 'errors' is the wrong word. We are on a production line. I just see this picture of a production line and if there's a discrepancy in one of the products, it gets pushed out and okay, you know, it's like, ok, problem though it is.

For Jonathan the Job Centre is akin to being at a factory, where he is both being processed and equally involved in working the line at the factory. He achieves this by fulfilling his obligations of providing proof of his job search to the required standard. When he fails to do this correctly the consequences are drastic. He talks about an example of this where he was sanctioned (having benefits withdrawn, in this case for two weeks), saying:

> If I'd written down a complete load of imaginary gobbledy-gook [in his finding work journal], the way she'd wanted it to look. I would have been fine [instead he had written the following "applied for job x and then ditto, ditto"]

Usually, though, Jonathan plays his part correctly, and the Job Centre play theirs and he continues doing the work he needs to fulfil their requirements.

In this section the many types of work the participants undertook were examined. These were activities that they spent considerable time and effort undertaking. Each activity was different, undertaken for different reasons and with different outcomes, however they were all phenomena situated in the temporal sphere, requiring and consuming considerable time from each individual. Signing on at the Job Centre was a phenomenon of time taken for Brian and Jonathan. Volunteering was a phenomenon of giving time, where Ryan and Jonathan gave up their time to others. The pursuit of arts, crafts and music was a phenomenon of time spent, where Colin and Bill spent their time happily lost in their activities.

All these types of work were phenomena of time taken, time given and time spent by the participants. They were activities that were both fleeting and enduring, taking place only for a few hours or over extended periods. They were also phenomena of necessity, meaning creation and self-esteem building, clearly situated within the temporal sphere, but also touched and intersected with the other existential themes, creating experiences that altered and shaped the lifeworlds of the participants and presumably the wider community of homeless people that beg, volunteer or pursue some artistic endeavour.

6.2 Dealing with Being Homeless

> I was going down the woods. And I 've got this big leather coat. And somebody's doused it in petrol. And I didn't know. I was uh… I've gone up the road. I was talking outside with Mike, and he got me this. He lit a cigarette up. And I went up [caught fire] … Ambulance pulls up. And, uh, whoop. There you go. I'm in intensive care again. For 4, 4, or 5 weeks. Now, they've drugged me, and uh, I've got 10 operations.
>
> Tony

Throughout this study it was clear that the participants faced hardship and challenge from many quarters due to being homeless. In this section how this was experienced and how the participants tried to deal with this is examined. Colin's story provides a good place to begin looking at this experience. His story was typical of many of the participants, a story where he was constantly battling both psychological and physical difficulties. He says:

> Went to see the doctor, yeah, and they… She put down, uh… Well, she put down, um, stress, and anxiety, and um, depression. (Colin)

He continues:

> Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because um, I still feel, that about 80% of people with, uh, mental health problems or homelessness or other, other kinds of problems, um, addictions, and everything, are just on the scrap heap. (Colin)

Although Colin is talking about others he is also talking about himself and his own demons of depression and the ever-present threat he faces of returning to drink. He is a man struggling with his past, acutely aware of the threat to his well-being if he lets depression seep back into his life. He is also someone plagued by a number of physical ailments and conditions. He says:

> I'm still having these, uh, pains in both my hands and my feet, which I thought it was arthritis and it was, it was that bad, it felt like it. I've now discovered it's a real lack of Vitamin D, but on my one big toe, it does hurt permanently and it's really, really sore and I think that is a little bit of arthritis. (Colin)

Colin's story is not unique, and is replicated multiple times not just across this study but throughout the wider population of individuals who are homeless. It is the story of someone homeless who is racked with both psychological and physical pain, an individual just about maintaining sobriety, resisting the temptation of drink and other addictions. The way Colin achieves this, at least for periods, provides us with a good example of how several of the participants tried to deal with the challenges of their homelessness.

For Colin doing something positive and creative has provided him with some mechanism to fend off the issues of depression and bodily pain. He literally discovered a creative world of art, design and music that not only provides him with the ability to manage the challenges he faces, but where he can also thrive and experience a much better self. For example he says:

> Yeah, yeah. If it wasn't coming for CRISIS or me coming here (drop-in centre) myself sorted out, and then knowing, getting to know CRISIS, I would not have bought out the creativity that was already locked up inside of me. I would never have been. (Colin)

For Colin the opportunity to study and practice art under the support of the CRISIS homeless charity provides him with some new meaning, unlocking something that he felt was inside him. He continues and shares the experience of doing art:

> Well this stuff there is basically, um, what we do, how we do it, what materials we've used, uh, like uh, obviously the canvas we used, uh, oils and paints, a tub for the water and everything like that. And, um, this is a step-by-step instruction like what method of what - how I went about it. And underneath it in red, I don't know why she put it in red, those were her comments about it. And even there as well… And I find it, like, it's relaxing as well as, uh, also intriguing. And it's involving yourself as well. I really do like that. (Colin)

Colin is occupied doing art, he is involved, captivated and engaged. It is therapeutic for him. The creative process, in this case art, enables Colin to put aside his depression, to forget his arthritis and to focus his mind on painting. Art helps him to "stay positive and strong" (Shankar et al., 2018, p.5). It is easy to understand that as he becomes enthralled and consumed by art dealing with the hardships of his life becomes easier. He is able to rebound against them through the enjoyment and pleasure he gets from his art. As Colin reveals more and more of his journey in the creative world it becomes apparent that he thrives in this environment, that it is something he is proud of. He describes where he was and where he is with the support from CRISIS:

> Nobody taught me anything, but with CRISIS, they taught me how to paint. They taught me how to paint and they taught me how to make jewellery as well, my own jewellery and mask making as well and with the painting, I actually done a painting, and I actually had it printed in a Big Issue. (Colin)

Shankar et al. (2018) bring some light to this type of experience, identifying it as something born of an individual's "strive[ing] toward change for themselves or their current situation" (p.5). For Colin this artistic growth provides him with the opportunity to fight off the depression and the pain in his body; he is not only able to muster forces of resistance but to thrive and grow. His artistic efforts act as a kind of medicine or panacea to the difficulties in his life.

Colin's effort and success are facilitated and brought to life through the body. Art for Colin is an activity firstly of his body, as it is something he does with his hands and his eyes. It provides him with the energy needed to stay on the tightrope of sobriety and positive mental health. It is a struggle that requires not just a positive activity that can keep one occupied but something that is consuming. One needs to feel

that they are growing, becoming better from the experience, which is a quality experience and not simply something mildly interesting. Another participant, Ryan, exemplifies this when he talks about volunteering as a classroom assistant for CRISIS. He says:

> [I help as a] classroom assistant, just assist the class tutor. Sort of, uh, handing out forms, uh, if anybody wants help, the tutor is actually busy doing something else, you can be there to help them, which is why I done the maths class… [I am] help[ing] them out… It's self-worth in it? It makes me realise that I'm not as bad as what I used to be. Or, I'm not as bad as what I perceive myself to be. (Ryan)

Ryan shows that his efforts to counter the hardship of his life are born of a sense of self-worth, which is embodied and encompassing. It is something that creates the energy and desire to resist some of the negatives in his environment; it is him dealing with the problems of being homeless, because for Ryan he feels his life now matters.

Another element of how the participants tried to deal with the challenges of being homeless is how many of them tried to maintain or return to some level of equilibrium in their lives, a phenomenon that is less about thriving and more about keeping oneself functioning. This is a point that Connor and Davidson (2003) emphasise, seeing it as something where one tries to become steady in the environment. Bonanno (2004) develops this and sees it in terms of the individual's "ability to maintain a stable equilibrium" (p.1), a psychological capability that can withstand loss, trauma and those other factors of stress or fracture to our homeostasis. It is an activity of "resistance to environment risk experiences" (Rutter, 2006, p.1), it is the ability to return again and again to equilibrium.

This struggle to maintain a level of equilibrium, to deal successfully with the challenges of their lives, appeared to be an important aspect of the lived experience of the participants, and possibly something to consider for the wider population of homeless people. Taking the example of James, it is clear that he is someone in a constant battle just to function, to keep from slipping back into the world of addiction and despair. James's story shows someone very concerned with his day-to-day survival, a survival that requires him to be constantly vigilant, struggling with the world around him and trying to maintain some level of equilibrium in his life. He describes his life in a hostel:

> Well, firstly, I wake up early. I wake up pretty early about 5 o'clock. I wake up normally on average about 5… I tend to get up. Like I got into a routine and… I tend to get up and… Uh, I'll have a cup of tea… Sometimes I have a wash and a shave… Like, and then… Uh… I come down and watch the television at 6 o'clock and then start unwinding… Waking up to the day and at the same time, like, relieving all the stresses. All the stress from the day before. (James)

On the surface there would seem to be nothing remarkable here, nothing that unusual, a typical early morning for someone. However, there is something in this passage that is revealing, showing aspects of the lifeworld of James that are significant in how he deals with his world. What stands out is the issue of 'unwinding' by waking up at 5am. This is a little strange and out of the ordinary. For many unwinding is what we do at the end of the day, but for James getting up early is his chance to unwind, it provides him with the opportunity to de-stress, to sort himself out before he not only faces the day, but faces the people he shares the hostel with. It is his chance to gather his strength and re-set his position. Sitting down at 6am, probably alone, to watch breakfast TV is an act of rebounding from the previous day, it is him restoring some level of balance to his world. It is him taking some time out for himself, unburdened by others, free of the coming turmoil of hostel life and the outside world. This is a conscious effort by James to oppose the challenges of his life by getting up early, it is pulling himself early out of bed, and it is getting his head straight and level for the coming turmoil of his day. It is a struggle against hardship and adversity, something to keep him steady and together, safe, in a state of balance and not falling into a world of despair. It is an experience that is felt in his body as he rises early in the morning, drinks his tea and watches TV.

This effort to return to or maintain a kind of equilibrium, a means of preventing a slip into a worse psychological or physical state, was a phenomenon underlining James's world that was not exclusive to him. Others in the study demonstrated this in similar ways. For example Jonathan's description of how he likes to keep his flat:

> I'm also a bit ... I don't exactly suffer from OCD, but I like everything precisely where it is. If anybody comes in and starts pushing things, I'm always, "Don't move that. Don't move that," you

know, "Leave it alone," "Okay, just play your guitar, I know you can." That sort of a thing. You know, do you mind, this is my place I've got it exactly the way I like it. It's no big deal, but don't.

Like James's example there is more to this passage than a first reading would suggest. It is not simply someone keeping their flat tidy. It is a story of someone fighting the problems of depression and terminal cancer, someone who has been unemployed for 20 years after suffering a breakdown and who has experienced trauma through being homeless. Jonathan's flat is his place, a temporal space of order and stability amidst the problems of his life outside. Jonathan finds his equilibrium in the place where he lives, having everything just so, in its place, organised and just how it likes it. Like the moment of peace and quiet that James finds in the early morning, Jonathan experiences this in his tidy flat. It is something connected to this place, enabling Jonathan to find some stability, to rebound back to equilibrium once he returns from the turmoil and pain of his external world.

In both James's and Jonathan's examples we see the struggle against the challenges of their lives as a way to return to or maintain equilibrium. For James this was a phenomenon created through time, with the early morning awakening and time to himself, whereas for Jonathan it was a phenomenon arising out of space and the place where he lives. However, as these phenomena emerged they became embodied, becoming part of their bodies, providing protection from those circumstances that are hazardous to their well-being. Both men seem to have needed some way to rebound, re-group and return to somewhere inside themselves that is strong enough for them to carry on. In these terms they found their own ways to keep on the straight and narrow, to protect themselves against the world they inhabit. How it is created and maintained varies but it ultimately becomes something embodied, enabling the individual to keep their back straight and head held high. It is a phenomenon that enables equilibrium and prevents them from slipping back into a world of depression, pain and angst.

Dealing with the challenges of their lives was also something that was not static for the participants, being something that could be developed and improved upon. Application of self could be built up and shaped by the individual. Bill's experience of this provides a sense of how this can occur. For a number of years before becoming homeless Bill was a very heavy drinker. During the course of this study he had secured a flat from a homeless hostel and was beginning to put his life back together. Discussing giving up drink he says:

> You're so depressed and... you know, then all the thoughts and all the bad things and all the weird things in life are going up, so you go and have another drink to numb the pain really, bury your head in the sand I mean. So that... that was one of the hardest things I've ever done, was to stop drinking. The first 2 or 3 months were hard, but still… You'd gone completely... What do we call it... Uh, don't drink any alcohol. Nothing at all. I haven't had a drink now for... Since I've been to the hostel. First day I got here, I didn't have a dri- I've haven't drunk si- I haven't drunk since, which is... Which has cleared my mind, um, and I think that's made me more responsible, and s- I... I think now that nobody else is gonna... They will help me get on with my life, but they won't do it for me, and now I've found with myself, it's up to me to st- just to be a... Be a bit more of a man, be more responsible. (Bill)

Becoming sober in and of itself is not an unusual occurrence, and although maintaining sobriety does reflect a level of control of more importance in this narrative is the sense of movement. Bill is not sober, he is becoming sober, and he is getting better at it. Over the months his ability to resist alcohol improves, and he becomes "more of a man," someone strengthening their resolve. This improvement and growth is carried into how Bill thinks about and responds to his body, building his ability to resist alcohol through a regime of diet and exercise, something commented upon earlier when he says:

> Um, health wise yeah. I'm, I'm trying to lose a bit of weight. Um, I went to a guy who works of um, it's a dietary company and I think it's The Health Exchange I think. And they're at … and he told me basically ... He gave me not a diet plan, it's things you should eat and not rocket science… Used to be able to play football ex-cetera but since I've had my hip done, I've let my weight go a little bit ex-cetera but I think if you, if your body's fitter, I think your minds fitter, I think so over the next couple of months I'm going with this, get myself hopefully a little bit fitter. I've got my sleeping pattern right now. Uh, well obviously over the last year or so it's been all over the place. When I'm getting ready to sleep I'm feeling healthy, trying to ease it to be better. So, it's all positive now. (Bill)

This is someone experiencing growth and improvement through their body. Bill is building his ability to prevent a slip back to his old ways, resisting it by making his body and health stronger. This body work

lifts his spirit, provides affirmation for his efforts and confidence that he will be able to continue his journey. It is dealing with hardship as a conscious act, preventing the individual from slipping back to a past of pain and sorrow. Bill's story shows clearly that these efforts are not a static thing but instead are something that can improve, growing and becoming stronger alongside the individual. For Bill it is effort felt in every atom of his body, as his weight decreases and his strength and fitness return, such that keeping sober and on track becomes easier, and resisting alcohol also becomes easier. It is something that improves the more it succeeds.

Through the examples above some of the ways in which the participants tried to deal with the adversity and hardship of being homeless were examined. They were diverse, but typically embodied, enabled by and experienced in the body. Another example of how the participants tried to deal with being homeless and the issues it brings with it comes from Frank's life. During the course of the interviews with Frank he often discussed the violence and bullying he faced or witnessed. He is a man nearing sixty who comes across as someone suffering a level of mental impairment and possibly undiagnosed mental health issues. The following conversation sheds some light on how Frank reacts and thinks about the violence that inhabits his word. He says:

> One o'clock in the morning the pub in Wolsey, um, and, and Susan has lost a bag or something, it might have been a bag. You've never seen so much trouble in one pub in your life. Just over a bag because it was pinched. Someone tried to pinch her bag and she just gone out and everything that she can do to her. Places is in uproar.
>
> (Question to Frank). How do you feel about that? How do you feel about the violence that you keep being…
>
> Can't do anything about it. You can't change people. I wish sometimes that I was like that. I could be rough and ready in the… Yeah. I'm not a coward to walk away. That's coward to me that cowardice. I'm just old like, them outside. Abandoned building. I've said, "Why the hell would that bloke swore at you or whatever he did to you?" Why didn't you turn the other cheek and walk away or just like or just laugh at him? Don't go around punching people because cause it's not worth it. (Frank)

There are two stories in this quote. Firstly, there is Frank's nonchalant attitude towards the violence in the pub. His description, like others he retold of similar occasions, is devoid of the shock that might be expected. He is a regular witness of altercations and fights in pubs, becoming immune, acclimatised to the violence. For him there seems to be a stubborn refusal to be moved or affected by altercations. Frank maintains equilibrium by being unmoved, balanced even in the face of violence.

The second, and related, way this violence is experienced is seen in Frank's comment about not being a coward. This feels like a dialogue to self, expressed by Frank as wanting to be able to stand his ground, not fighting but instead turning the other cheek, laughing off the abuse. Although not explicitly expressed here, there was a sense throughout the other interviews that Frank often faced abuse and the threat of violence. In this passage he is expressing how he has turned the other cheek, refusing to either react or run away. It is an act tinged with some pain, it is about Frank being able to face the name calling, face the abuse, to stand against the torment he met. It is an act of strength, standing up for others and standing up for himself. It is not the Frank that we met earlier, locked in his room in the hostel avoiding others. It is not Frank 'the fearful', cowering from confrontation, instead, it is an act of bravery and pride for Frank. A point captured by him when he says, "yeah. I'm not a coward".

A final example of how the participants dealt with the challenges of their circumstances was Tony's story and how he did not let a very injured body and losing his welfare benefits get him down. During the course of the study Tony disappeared for nearly a year after the initial interview, and when he finally re-surfaced at the drop-in centre a second interview took place in which he revealed the horrors that he had experienced, which accounted for his absence. Tony had been set on fire and then later, after leaving the hospital, he was seriously assaulted when he was asleep. Discussing the assault, the following conversation took place:

> Me - "So, someone's basically, while you've been asleep, smacked you [with an iron bar]? The person basically half-killed you when you're asleep… Was that… Is that… A knife cut [across your face]?"

Tony - "Yes. I was startled, I could do nothing and it was muddy and I fell down and I couldn't get up. Anyway… somehow. I was over there and the fire's over there, you know what I mean? That's when I've come around, put my hand [in the fire and burnt my arm]."

During the interview he was obviously feeling bouts of severe discomfort, apologising several times for needing to stand up and stretch to ease the pain in his back. His back and lower legs (which he showed me during the course of the interview) looked more like over-cooked bacon than human skin, it was truly awful. However, with his typical humour and understatement, he says of his situation:

I've had a bit of a battle, as you might say. I think it was a survival programme for me. (Tony)

Given the poor state that Tony was in it would have been unsurprising if he had taken many months of bed rest and recuperation: a rest that would have given him the chance to gain some level of health and energy. However, being homeless does not afford one with such an opportunity, and instead once discharged from hospital (where he had spent several months) Tony had no choice but to return to his campsite in the woods and begin working again on living there.

One of the downsides of an extended period in hospital for Tony was that he lost his welfare benefits. Discussing this situation Tony explains the challenge he faced with the Job Centre when he returned after his hospital stay:

And, well, they made a strict deadline, they did, at the Job Centre. Well, the best bloke there [has been] moved him upstairs. So, I give it [note from hospital/doctors] to the girl, I gave it to her, they didn't believe it, she couldn't get it [the information off] her computer. Anyway, they stopped my money. (Tony)

Tony's efforts were futile, his story about being in a hospital was not accepted and he was therefore judged as having not actively searched for work and sanctioned, resulting in him losing his welfare payments for a period. Arguably this is an experience of structural othering by the Job Centre, with Tony being judged and his excuse dismissed, such that he is subsequently further economically marginalised. This is not such an unusual consequence for those who are homeless. Despite this, and his

obvious injuries, Tony carried on and returned to his life in the woods, managing his life there the best he could.

A number of examples where the participants were able to deal relatively effectively with the challenges arising from their homelessness have been reviewed, but their success, or at least ability to mitigate these challenges somewhat, was not necessarily typical of all the participants nor the wider population of people without homes. Unfortunately failure to adequately deal with the problems of being homeless was a regular feature for many of the participants in this study and is something commonly seen in the wider population of individuals without homes. For the participants within this study being unable to effectively deal with their circumstance could be most easily identified when they regressed or fell back into the world of addiction or depression, a world that they had been trying hard to avoid returning to. This was a return to binge drinking, violence, depression and despair.

James, whose example above gave us an insight into one of the ways he tried to deal with the hardship he faced in a hostel, was someone who regularly failed to maintain his equilibrium. Drink, drugs and violence were the things he sought to avoid, but which would return frequently to his life, even during the course of this study. One particularly horrific example of this was when he overdosed on some illegal narcotics after being expelled from his hostel and was found with his neck slashed open, lying on the street in the early morning. It was hard to get to the bottom of his story when discussing this incident several months later as he was either intoxicated or under the influence of some other drug at the time. However, what he could relay, and what came across through stories told by others that knew him, made it clear that he was very close to dying and that he had literally hit rock bottom.

Another example of a failure to deal effectively with the problems of homelessness is exemplified by Colin. He had been one of the most reliable of the participants throughout the study. However, before the last scheduled interview he stopped coming to the drop-in centre, which had been a regular part of his life. Although we were never to meet again I discovered that he had re-entered a dark and destructive period of heavy drinking and depression, which included him getting rid of his prized bass guitar and other things that had been a part of his journey into art, music and design. During this study there were other examples where the individuals failed to maintain equilibrium, where their ability to deal effectively

with the problems in their lives failed and they were plunged backward into a life of hardship and deprivation.

The pathways out of homelessness can be hard and many simply fail to achieve re-entry back into mainstream society. Homeless people again and again seem to muster the energy and motivation to pull themselves forward, are able to avoid the deprivation of their lives, and then suddenly relapse. McNaughton (2008) coined the phrase 'flip-flopping' (p.99) to describe the effect of individuals who experience homelessness beginning to make strides forward and out of this world, only to be met by some set-back or other, thus finding themselves back where they started. McNaughton, speaking specifically about the structural changes of gaining some level of accommodation, says "a crucial aspect of this flip-flopping was that it was often events that occurred due to them trying to make integrative passages that actually created the conditions that cause this ongoing divestment. Therefore, they were trapped in this space by the edge" (2008, p.101). Certainly within this study some of the participants did seem to flip-flop, at one moment recovering, moving forward, and seeming to be on top of their world, and then suddenly returning to their previous life of addiction and despair. The specific reasons for these relapses fell outside the remit of this study, and here it should simply be noted that the debate around this is wide and includes those who focus on individual reasons and those who take a much more structural approach (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2013, Finfgeld-Connett, 2010, Fitzpatrick, 2005, Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016, Hopper and Baukohl, 1994). What was clear though is that participants were aware that their lives were balanced on a knife edge, where there were forces both internal and external to them which could lead them to fall.

In the above section it was clear that effectively dealing with the challenges of being homeless was something demonstrated by many of the participants, brought forth and enabled through weary bodies and bruised hearts. The manner of doing this was varied and diverse, something which did "not emerge among… as an all-or-nothing phenomenon" (Shankar et al., 2018, p. 8). At its heart it entails some level of resistance that could prevent the individual from returning to a world of harm or despair. For the individuals in the study, and the wider population of individuals without homes, they seemed to be forever balancing on a tightrope, forever with the potential to fall and succumb to addiction, despair and despondency. Not falling was a constant challenge and is exemplified well through the words of Philippe

Petit, the tightrope walker who famously walked a high wire between the Twin Towers in New York (1974), when he says:

> If I am practicing on the wire, and you pushed me, I would not move, and if you take a piece of wood and beat me up on the shoulder and the head, I would not move. You would not put me out of balance. You would not be able to. I am solid as granite when I am on the tightrope, and I should be. (Petit, 1974)

For the participants of this study, and for the wider population of homeless people, to keep from falling was and remains a constant challenge.

6.3 The Struggle for Agency

> You will not tell the rivers not to flow. You will not tell the sun not to shine. You will not tell me what I should and should not do.
>
> Pratchett, 2001

Taking, and keeping, control of your life when you are homeless is a constant challenge. Poverty, addiction, violence, authority and much more, seeks to deny this population the agency over their life that many of us take for granted. For the participants in this study agency was a constant issue, which one level was experienced quite basically, focussing on efforts to gain some control over their corporeality. At a more fundamental level were their complex efforts to gain control over the day-to-day world they experienced, including dealing with authority, money and identity.

In this section how the participants tried to secure agency in their lives is examined. It is an experience set within a wider debate on the nature of structure and agency in determining how people behave. Exploration of this is outside the scope of this study; however, the reader should be aware that although this section sits within this important area of social scientific thought the focus here is to simply show

how efforts by the participants to gain and maintain personal agency were experienced. The first example of this effort is Ryan's story of taking on a new false identity.

Homeless people rely heavily upon the State for their welfare, including the provision of various financial benefits to pay for accommodation and food. It is not a relationship of equals and is instead one where the State has considerable authority and control. Dealing with this lopsided relationship was a constant battle for many of the participants and it is to Ryan's attempt to circumvent some of the power of the benefits office through assuming a new identity that we turn first. His story begins when he goes into a Job Centre to start a new claim for unemployment benefit. He says:

> Right. I walked into a Job Centre, and I said, "I want to claim JSA (Job Seekers Allowance)." Well it was unemployment benefit, then. It wasn't JSA, it was unemployment benefit. And, uh, I said uh, "I want to claim unemployment benefit," and she gave me all these forms to fill in and that. And I had an issue, and she said, um, what, "what have you been doing like?" You know what I mean? I said, "I used to work for me' dad and he's made me redundant as his business has gone bust." And, uh, she said, "can you tell me your national insurance number?" And I said, "I'm not sure what it is, 'cause I used to pay cash in hand, all right?" And she asked me what my name was, [and I lied and said] Stephen King like, I used to read…. And she said that's okay, then right, sign on next week? Yeah? So, I spent a week, thinking, well you know, they must cotton [on], you know what I mean? Sort of hesitation about sort of question like, you know what I mean? So, I signed on next week, and she said there is your giro [welfare cheque] Mr King. You know what I mean? (Ryan)

There are some background reasons for Ryan deciding to use a different name, including keeping quiet about the debt he owed. He also saw the possibility of signing on later at another Job Centre under his real name and so potentially doubling the benefits he could receive. However, whatever his motivation, Ryan not only decided to deceive this Job Centre initially but then continued the ruse for several more months. This included persuading the Job Centre to "give, they give… [me] a national insurance number" (Ryan), so that he can set up a bank account and legitimise his new personality. His story shows the power dynamic making a remarkable about turn, where the Job Centre unwittingly helps Ryan take on the persona of Stephen King and so they become complicit in his benefit fraud.

Agency arrives for Ryan apparently uncalled for, where he seemed to be an unwitting accomplice to the events and their outcomes. Not having identification or information about his circumstances when applying for benefits is framed by him as an oversight, a lack of knowledge and understanding by someone who is just a victim of the system. He is someone who is then caught up in an unexpected challenge and lies as a reaction to this, someone who then spends a week fretting about the incident before collecting his payment. However this was not the first time Ryan had made a claim for welfare payment, as he had many years of experiencing unemployment and the associated benefits system was a normal part of his life, so some further examination is required here to understand what is actually happening.

Van Manen explains that "meaning is not something that can just be scooped up from the spoils and layers of debris of daily living" (2014, p.18), that we must reflect upon the experience and look beyond its appearance (van Manen, 1990). Underneath the appearance of a simple conversation between Ryan and the Job Centre something unexpected is initiated. As Ryan tells the first small lie about having no official personal information the conversation between the two grows, building and building upon itself, where agency travels across the space between the two people, landing with Ryan when he becomes Stephen King. It is agency initiated in the intersubjective world and then becoming embodied within Ryan, where agency is not wrestled from the Job Centre employee but taken hesitantly, as if at any moment the lies will be uncovered and Ryan will be exposed. It is the phenomenon of personal agency arising from a construction, bit by bit, a dance of meaning and understanding. It is agency that is conjoint, not "hindered or overwhelmed by the expectations or requirements of others (Markus and Kitayama, 2003, p.8), but constructed and fashioned, unwittingly, with the employee at the Job Centre.

Though this experience a new narrative is created , where Ryan becomes the author of a new identity, not only creating a new persona but also having to play the part of his new identity. This is agency as a mechanism of authorship, providing Ryan with a "new first-person narratives that permit the telling of a new history that is more tolerable, coherent, and continuous with [his] present intention and agency" (Anderson, 1997, p.231). As he gains this agency he also gains new responsibilities, having to live two lives and to work to keep up this identity. It is personal agency as something of an effort, coming at a price, requiring the recipient to do more than before. It is agency that reveals itself to him as he contemplates and frets over the deception he has created.

Turning to another story about the Job Centre we see from another perspective how personal agency is struggled with. Brian was a frequent visitor to his local Job Centre, which, although difficult and demeaning at times, was a place where he made efforts to maintain or gain personal agency. It was something he was self-conscious and deliberate about. He did this in several ways, but most effectively through regular conversation, often just as monologues full of sarcasm, wit and challenge. For example, he would always refer to the Job Centre as the "joke shop" (Brian) which was greeted by the staff with little amusement and resulted in his being punished and forced to leave and come back inside through a different door and into a secure room. On one occasion when he had been sent to this secure room he decided to once again try to exert some authority over the situation in the following way:

> Talking about diabetes [Brian is diabetic] though, they put us in the naughty room (secure room) and I seen this sign 'No Smoking', I thought fair enough. [There was also the sign] 'No Drinking', no drink, but I've got a bottle in there and if I'm thirsty I'll get it out and I'll drink. Fair enough, but it said no food or drink, so I went and asked one of the chaps on the thing, I says, "is there any chance of speaking to a manager?" And they wouldn't let us speak to a manager. I say, "well, can you relay this information to the manager? I'm type 1 diabetic, if my sugars drop and your sign says I can't eat or drink, which is a medical condition, it's a side effect of the insulin your sugars go below 3.5, you reach 0 and you're dead. Your sign, I can't eat or drink to rectify my low sugars, what am I supposed to do?" He's gone away, comes back and apparently who he talked to, the manager, says you need to go outside. I say, "I'm not moving anywhere. If it happens in there, I'm sitting down. They can do whatever they want," do you know what I mean? They can call the police, I'll tell the police exactly what I'm telling them. (Brian)

Unlike in Ryan's example of personal agency Brian is much more brazen, confident and assured of his position. He issues a direct challenge to the authority of the Job Centre, where he literally calls them out over their no drinking policy. It is agency built upon the body, a body suffering from diabetes but still strong and forthright. He is "not moving anywhere" (Brian), holding his ground and doing his best to exert his power. It could appear to be a childish action, but there is more here than just petulance. This is not just Brian trying to antagonise the Job Centre, but struggling to find some purchase, to be able to wrestle away some power from the Job Centre. He, like all of the participants in the study, was

in a seemingly endless battle with the Job Centre to secure his benefits and avoid being sanctioned (having benefits stopped as a form of punishment). Brian is seeking some control over the situation despite being held in a state of virtual captivity in the 'secure room' as he waits to be interviewed. He is aware of what he is doing but it is pre-reflective, it is in the moment, it is Brian testing and pushing authority. Like Ryan he is creating a new narrative, which paradoxically does not position him as weak or as a victim of diabetes but instead as firm and strong, willing to take on the authority of the Job Centre. Additionally, it is, like Ryan's example, conjoint, being created only through the interaction of Brian and the Job Centre employees and the circumstance they have created.

In both these Job Centre examples, where power would appear to be asymmetric and compelling on the side of the State, Ryan and Brian were able to mount a level of resistance. This is an example of personal agency easing its way into a hostile environment, unplanned and brought forth spontaneously and without reflection. It is personal agency as an act of resistance against the controlling Job Centre. It is also an act of creativity, leading to both individuals gaining some new authorship over their lives. Their actions may have been dishonest, or in Ryan's case criminal, but that is not how they experienced these events. For them it was about gaining some control over their situation, taking back some of the control they had lost when they became unemployed and homeless. Their examples of gaining agency are also a paradox, taking place somewhere that typically denies or at least limits the personal agency of those coming for help. Theirs are examples of the position of power being reversed and agency shifting towards them. Finally, it is agency existing in the intersubjective world, created through the interaction of people, but then finding its place in the corporal sphere, becoming something experienced by and through the bodies of the participants. For Brian this is a body of diabetes used to leverage authority over a Job Centre that sought to punish him by sending him to the secure room. For Ryan he becomes someone else, a new identity, a famous writer, albeit one who is beset by worry and the fear of being uncovered.

Compelling as they are these two examples were exceptional, as for the other participants any attempt to gain power or personal agency in the Job Centre was either futile or could result in unfortunate consequences. An example of this was given by Jonathan, who described what happened when he failed to follow the correct protocol over how he filled in his work search log (a requirement for individuals receiving unemployment benefit), which he describes as follows:

> Yeah, I'd written my job search log up, describe what I've been doing and the one before, I'd just put ditto, ditto. Because I couldn't be bothered to write everything out long hand, and they said, that's not good enough. I said, what do you mean, it's not good enough? I said, you have to write everything out long hand, so the following week I'd done most of it longhand and without thinking I'd gone ditto, ditto underneath. I walked in and she said no, I've warned you about that, you're sanctioned. Just like that. Two weeks, money stopped, no come back whatsoever.

Jonathan appears shocked and flabbergasted by the reaction he is met with at the Job Centre. He may not have consciously sought out agency when using abbreviations in his work search record, however he feels that the sanctioning (stopping of his benefits) was harsh and unjust. As the experience is reflected back upon it becomes even more difficult for Jonathan to comprehend. As he described the event to me he still felt incredulous and angry. It is an experience of someone coming face-to-face with overarching power, where there is no redress, where personal agency is crushed. For Jonathan his agency is removed from him, leaving him reeling and bitter.

As with Ryan and Brian's examples above, Jonathan's experience of agency, or in his case its loss, begins in the intersubjective realm, brought forth in a clash with the Job Centre employee, a clash that hits hard, reverberating through and into his body. It is felt as an act of punishment by the Job Centre, designed to bring hardship to his life, a strike against his very body and soul. It is hurt delivered as a deterrent so that he will not step out of line next time. This kind of experience with the Job Centre was much more common for the individuals involved in this study than those like Brian and Ryan's. It further differs in the lack of collaboration between the Job Centre employee and the claimant. For most of the participants there is no opportunity for conjoint agency, no room for interdependence or cooperation. Instead they, like Jonathan, stand alone, without agency, before the faceless structures of the Job Centre.

This issue of sanctioning by the Job Centre has attracted increasing attention in recent years, particularly as the degree and severity of these sanctions have grown following the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (Batty et al., 2015). For people who are homeless the Job Centre and the benefits they enable are a critical element of their life. It is a system that they have to navigate correctly and appropriately if they are to be successful. It is also a place where attempts to challenge or assert some personal agency can be catastrophic, resulting in becoming literally penniless. In this study the examples of Ryan and Brian stand

out as the exceptions, showing that even in an environment where power is seriously asymmetric, held firmly by the Job Centre, individuals can still bring their personal agency to bear upon their world.

Another area of agency that was significant for this group of men, and something that is at the heart of much of the debate around being homeless in general, was their relationship to and control over where they stayed. This is something Stolte and Hodgetts (2013) explore in their paper on how homeless people manage their lives in unhealthy places. In this study three levels of accommodation were used or accessed by the participants, these were rough sleeping (outside), staying in a room in a hostel, and thirdly, living in some kind of flat provided by the Council or other agency. In this study only one participant was a long-term rough sleeper, and it is his experience of personal agency that is examined next.

Tony had been living in the woods for around three years when he became a participant in this study, with the reasons for his ending up in the woods having begun with him having all his possessions stolen while staying in a hostel. This was an event that quickly escalated and resulted in him becoming frustrated with the costs of staying, and with his life in there, which he describes as follows:

> Well, just a little bit bigger than this roof (pointing around the small room where we are having the conversation). How much a week? I tell you, what you got. You got a sink in the cor[ner], a little cabin, and a second-hand single bed, but you- And the mattress. You have to get your own stock. So, £176 pound a week. Yeah. Plus, if you use the kitchen, it's a tenner a week. [So] nobody's gotten cook. If you want to use the washing machine, it's a £5 a day. And we have a- we have another back washer we call it. I go, hang on, I'll work this out. £176, plus the tenner, £186, plus the £5. That's £191 a week. And outside (his den in the woods), I can show you, I got... Full bedding board. Now I've got people coming down my woods to keep warm at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. (Tony)

For Tony the woods provide a better place to live than the hostel. Not only is it cheaper, but good enough to attract his friends to come down and share the warmth of his fire. He is not sleeping rough like so many other homeless people, cold on a concrete floor, curled up in a shop doorway, instead Tony is camping in the woods. He shows that homeless people can make "homes for themselves on the

streets (or in the woods) that are more homely than when they are housed" (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p.162). Tony continues his description of his camp saying, "we don't get cold, we don't get wet… once you've got your plastic on the floor". Living in the woods has also provided him with the opportunity to save some of his benefits money: "I can save 25 pounds… a week."

Tony's life in the woods was unique amongst the participants of this study but remains illustrative of the more common rough sleeping seen in the city. His experience brings forth one central but often overlooked aspect of rough sleeping, that the refusal to stay in a hostel can be an act of personal agency. For Tony deciding to quit hostel life in favour of the woods is an example of personal agency manifesting as a conscious choice, a decision that could potentially bring discomfort and hardship upon him. It seems to be an irrational act, with his desire to remain free and unfettered by hostel living overriding the immediate corporeal needs of his body. He literally walks out of the dry and warm hostel in favour of sleeping under a tarpaulin amongst the trees. He, like so many others, forsakes hostel accommodation for the cold and hardship of sleeping rough. Tony's experience shows some of the reasons why homeless people do not often like to stay in a hostel, and in previous sections of these findings there were other examples of hostels being a hard place to stay. For Tony, and many others, it is a conscious and deliberate choice to sleep rough rather than stay in a hostel. This is agency as a phenomenon that is disjointed and personal, where independent living, free and outside, is preferred over the roof and walls of hostel life. It is agency where the corporeal body is unchained and free, paradoxically as it may even harm that very body. It is free will embodied in individuals sleeping on cardboard box beds, under dishevelled blankets, or in Tony's case under a plastic sheet in the woods. It is also agency as an experience of self-authorship. For Tony he both creates and writes a new tale of his life, living in the woods beside his camp fire, a tale not of strained survival but of thriving, bringing forth a positive outlook, warmed by the fire, buoyed by the money saved. For Tony the story he tells re-affirms for him that his decision was a good one. It is agency where the body is firstly put at risk but then rewarded with a life free and unencumbered.

Tony's experience shows that the phenomenon of personal agency for people who are homeless is most stark, most clear, in respect of the place they sleep. It is something that begins in a place, in the spatial surroundings of their dwellings, the ground, the space the individual inhabits. It is a phenomenon of space felt through and experienced by the body, whether that be the cold or warmth, the rain or the sun. For rough sleepers personal agency is complex and paradoxical, an abandonment of hostel living for

something that would seem much worse. It is an act that creates consternation and misunderstanding, especially when one witnesses slumped, dishevelled and shivering bodies in the gaps and crevices of our cities. This is a reaction that has galvanised into broad social policy interventions which seek to encourage rough sleepers to take up places in hostels and other roofed accommodation, efforts which may be well meaning but which are for some contrary to their desire.

For homeless people personal agency can be in short supply, with opportunities to have control or power over their lives reduced and minimised by their lack of money and personal resources. Despite this being the norm some of the participants in this study were able to grasp agency, to exert their will upon difficult situations, often at considerable risk to their well-being. Agency for the participants was a phenomenon born in the world, created interdependently, a "two-way discursive process" (Anderson, 1997, p.213). It was also something that operated spatially, in the places where homeless people chose to stay. As it gains substance, as awareness seeps into it, it becomes an act of the body, the body defying the odds, whether these are manmade at the Job Centre or simply result from the harshness of the environment of the woods.

Chapter 7 - Discussion and Conclusions

In this final chapter the themes and insights from this study are drawn together, exploring how they have contributed to the world of knowledge, with their implications for the wider body of thought on homelessness and social policy discussed. Each chapter is reviewed and the main points summarised, before moving on to a detailed examination of the findings, and then finally drawing some conclusions for this study.

7.1 Introduction

This study was a psychological phenomenological study of nine homeless men in the West Midlands, UK. It was informed by the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of Max van Manen (1990, 2007, 2014), an approach that is interpretative and focuses heavily on revealing the lived experience of others through phenomenological text analysis and writing. It was a study designed to answer the question - what is the lived experience of homeless men? Over the course of 18 months nine men who were experiencing varying levels of homelessness, ranging from rough sleeping to living in council provided accommodation, were interviewed about their lives. These interviews were recorded, analysed and then examined in order to understand their lifeworlds. During this process nine significant phenomena that impacted and shaped their worlds were uncovered. Although not alone in studying the lived experience of homeless men, this study has brought new understanding to the nuanced and complex world of people who are homeless, showing that many of the stereotypical views of this population are either incorrect or fail to take into account the diversity of experiences that exists. It is also a study that challenges some of the academic approaches to understanding homelessness and the general framing of it in a purely negative fashion which frequently fails to see the mixture of experience. This study, instead, shows that hermeneutic phenomenology, a qualitative method of research, can provide a rich and sensitive appreciation of the phenomenon of homelessness, one where its complex nature and diversity of experience are fully brought to view.

Chapter One set out the reasons for the selection of the subject matter and the methodological approach taken. It also explored the challenges of defining homelessness, as well as the selection of a definition which positions a lack of adequate accommodation at its centre. The search for a research question followed, exploring the types of homelessness which exist and the reasons for selecting homeless men and their lived experience as the subject of this study. The four subordinate questions were also discussed and the reasons for focussing on the intersubjective, corporeal, spatial and temporal worlds of the participants explained.

Chapter Two was a review of the main literature surrounding homelessness relevant to this study. This began with a review of some of the general literature on homelessness, looking to understand some of the main areas of homelessness that attract the interest of researchers and the challenges faced therein. However, the main focus of this section was to understand how research into homelessness is framed and what this means for this study. The second main area of literature reviewed focussed on the lived experience of homeless people. This included five phenomenological accounts that were similar in both approach and findings to this study, and provided insight into the questions that this study sets out to answer.

Chapter Three was an introduction to the overall theoretical framework applied in this study, followed by a detailed explanation of the phenomenological position and its component parts. This was followed with the process of describing the practicalities of conducting the research, including recruiting the participants, interviewing, analysing the data and writing the findings. The next section presented how the ethical considerations for conducting this study were managed, with the final section discussing the reflexive position of this study and how my subjectivity impacted it.

Chapter Four was the first section of the findings and explored the topics of boredom, shame and narratives of self-improvement that were revealed during analysis of the interviews. It was a chapter that illustrated some important elements of the lived experience of the participants, revealing some of the challenges they faced but also some of the positivity that could arise from being homeless.

Chapter Five was the second to examine the study findings and explored the topics of people and places. This was a chapter that looked at the intersubjective and spatial relationship the participants had with

others and with the places they frequented. It was a chapter that illustrated some of the dilemmas that being homeless can bring and how these impacted the lived experience of the participants.

Chapter Six was the third to focus on the findings and explored the topics of types of work, dealing with being homeless and the struggle for agency. It was another chapter that tackled some of the challenges of being homeless and how the participants dealt with this through their actions and efforts.

Finally, this chapter, Chapter Seven, draws this study to a close, considering the implications for social policy and opportunities for further research into homelessness that the study raised.

7.2 The Experience of Boredom, Shame and Self-Improvement

Chapter Four of the findings explored the three phenomena of boredom, shame and self-improvement. These three experiences of the participants brought forth and illustrated the effect that homelessness had on their lifeworld. They were nuanced and complicated affairs, bringing a range of feelings and emotions, some that were positive and others that had the potential to take them back to addiction and depression.

Boredom, considered in the first section of this chapter, was a pervasive phenomenon, touching many of the participants, something that O'Neil (2017) suggests is also ubiquitous across the wider population of people who are homeless. For many of the participants it was a frequent companion, usually troubling, and one that they tried hard to avoid. Boredom is a phenomenon that causes reflection and angst; one that is "a serious and pervasive experience for [the] homeless" (Marshall et al., 2019, p.2), that can drive individuals back into the world of addiction and depression. With some notable exceptions (O'Neil, 2017, Marshall et al., 2019, Wasserman and Clair, 2010), the experience of boredom and its impact on those who are homeless has often been over-looked in both research and social policy (Marshall et al., 2019). This is unfortunate as this study shows that it offers important insights into their lived world and brings new light to the subject of homelessness and the issues that surround it. At its simplest, boredom, especially the phenomenon of being 'bored by' (Heidegger, [1938] 1983), brought about a need for the

participants to find something to fill their time, a challenge for people who have few resources to pay for entertainment, travel or spend time with others. This is a point which concurs with Marshall et al's (2019) findings when they say; "boredom typically emerges in the absence of opportunities for engaging in meaningful activity" (p.10). At its more extreme end boredom was something serious and potentially harmful to the participants, in cases causing despair and the possibility of falling back into addiction or depression. However, despite a lack of resources, this study shows that boredom could also motivate some to find something constructive and meaningful to do. For several, through the support of charities such as CRISIS, they were able to discover art, music and writing; activities that brought new and positive meaning to their world. Boredom, it seems, was a phenomenon that made it possible for the 'existential vacuum' (Frankl, 1954) created from their homelessness and its associated issues to be filled, at least in part.

Chapter Four shows how pernicious and widespread the problem of boredom was for the participants, something that concurs with the wider literature on the subject of homelessness and boredom. However what was a new revelation in this study was how the participants' efforts to keep at bay, to stave or avoid boredom, led to them undertaking new and meaningful activities that supported their self-improvement and in some cases personal transformation. It was another example of the frequently paradoxical lifeworld of the participants, one where the difficulties of their homelessness had surprising and sometimes positive outcomes.

From boredom the chapter moved on to the phenomenon of shame, something that, like boredom, brought anguish and blight to the lives of many of the participants. It was a phenomenon that could be deep and hurtful, impacting upon not just their present but also their future lives. It was born in the intersubjective space between participants and others, typically constructed from transgressions, either real or imaginary, that were witnessed. Its effects could derail and fracture their lives, bringing forth "a painful sense of worthlessness and failure" (Fall, 2014, p.69). It was a phenomenon driven by circumstances, many of which were out of the control of the participants and in some cases overwhelming. This is something reflected in the research into shame and stigma experienced by people who are homeless (Kidd, 2007, 2009, Fall, 2014, Farrugia, 2011, Phelan et al., 1997, Belcher and DeForge, 2012, Baumberg et al., 2012, Rayburn and Guittar, 2013). Their research also highlights, as does this study, that although shame may diminish self-worth it can also be resisted and overcome. Clear as this

is, this study goes beyond simply showing that shame is a consequence of homelessness and can be resisted, a view common in the literature. It shows that the participants were not simply victims of their circumstances and people who could, at best, simply resist shame. Instead some were able to move beyond any sense of shame felt and replace this with the pride of success in their activities of art, writing and crafts. This experience was made further vivid and tangible by the contrasting nature of the feelings of shame and self-worth. This is illustrated by Steinbeck (1962) when he writes, "what good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."

This chapter also showed that shame for some of the participants was a bitter experience, one that could darken their present lives and make their future seem bleak and unwelcoming. However it could also enable positive changes, bringing both happiness and an increased sense of self-worth, made more apparent and visible to participants through their very experience of shame. Much like boredom, shame is a difficult and unwelcome consequence for many experiencing homelessness, but this study shows that it is also something that may enable or at least make more apparent the positive outcomes of self-improvement and transformation.

The final element of the three phenomena examined in Chapter Four were experiences of self-improvement, the most positive phenomenon within this study. It was an unexpected outcome, one not initially looked for but something that became increasingly apparent during the interviews. It was a phenomenon born out of the issues and problems of being homeless, sharing much in common with the research into personal growth following trauma, which shows how difficult and stressful experiences can result in positive personal change (Spaten et al., 2011, Janoff-Bulman, 2004, Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2006, Davies, 2012). For some participants the very hardship and problems associated with their homelessness appear to have encouraged them to embark upon a journey of self-improvement. This journey ranged from taking an increased interest in personal appearance and health, to the study of music, art and crafts. This study revealed how encompassing and powerful such a change could be, in some cases providing new meaning and opportunity to move further away from some of the issues that either moved individuals into homelessness or were a negative consequence of it.

Another interesting insight from the study, one moving beyond the typical literature on homelessness, was how this self-improvement was a phenomenon of self-authorship, where some of the participants

seemed to be able to take more control over their lives and embark on creating a new future. As a witness to these developments I was able to see changes in both their appearance and demeanour as they began to write new narratives about their lives. This included the simplest of things such as taking better care of their body or the joy and excitement of progressing in music. Self-improvement was a palpable experience that even from the outside I could witness and appreciate.

A final element uncovered in Chapter Four, and one that runs through much of the lifeworld of the participant, was how others were a catalyst or intrinsic part of the experience. It is well known in the literature that help from other people can be really beneficial in aiding someone to move beyond homelessness, although how subtle or nuanced this could be is perhaps not so well covered. This study clearly illustrates how others helped, often unknowingly, people who are homeless to change and improve. This ranged from someone simply showing some interest in their world to more profound moments of praise from a music teacher. For some it seemed that their worlds had been so devoid of such support and encouragement that receiving just a little at the right time was enough to set them on their new paths.

Chapter Four provides a clear picture of how self-improvement, even when it was only momentary, could be such a powerful and positive change for the participants, one that brings a new perspective to the framing of homelessness. It is a phenomenon that not only can mitigate many of the problems associated with being homeless, but can also enable the generation of new narratives that can potentially act as a pathway beyond its circumstances.

7.3 The World of People and Places

Chapter Five examined the lived experience of the participants in relation to the connection and interactions they had with the people and places that existed in their world. It began with the phenomenon of friendship, which occurred in two different ways in this study. The first was in terms of avoidance, where the participants avoided intimacy with their peer group, and the second was the desire to make friends with those outside their peer group. Turning to the first, there is little in the general

research literature into homelessness that examines this subject head on, instead tending to only consider this topic indirectly, where it comes into view in the accounts of the dangers of living in hostels or rough sleeping, and the general violence enacted on homeless people by other homeless people (Courtenay, 2018, Heerde et al., 2013, Lee and Schreck, 2005, NACRO, 1999). However the phenomenological studies of Lafuente and Lane (1995) and Holt et al. (2011) Watts (2012) do explore elements of this.

In Chapter Five the violence or the fear of violence from other homeless people in hostels was clearly illustrated, however the avoidance of intimacy with other homeless people beyond the hostel walls was more than simply them defending themselves against others. It was instead a conscious action to prevent a descent deeper into the world of homelessness. It was an act born of the realisation that the attitude and behaviours of other homeless people could be contagious and influence them negatively, that being around other homeless people, especially those who were deep in the cycle of addiction or depression, could be detrimental to their well-being. This avoidance of other homeless people was a phenomenon of self-preservation, an effort to not be seduced back into the world of addiction, depression and other issues that they sought to leave behind.

Chapter Five also illuminated the issues that many homeless people have with others who are homeless. It is something that appears in the literature frequently, ranging from issues in hostel life (Desjarlais, 1997, Holt et al., 2011, Hopper, 2003) to the problems of living on the street (Ballintyne,1999, Donley and Wright, 2012, Healy,1988). However this chapter goes beyond the dangers and problems homeless people face from their peers, revealing a depth of thought and planning that several of the participants undertook to avoid those around them who they felt would be unhelpful or harmful to their welfare. It is the avoidance of intimacy or friendship with other homeless people which manifests as something both more complex and more subtle than simply avoiding violence or physical harm.

The second phenomenon examined in Chapter Five was the desire of the participants for intimacy and friendship with those outside their circle of homeless acquaintances. It shows that this relationality was a serious and compelling ambition for many of the participants. The desire for this was unambiguous, but the reasons were more complicated and included, for several, the need to escape the loneliness they seemed to be experiencing, something that was compounded by their reluctance to form friendships

within their peer group, as discussed above. This study did not directly examine the issue of loneliness, but it was apparent during its course that several of the participants felt lonely and isolated from the social world. For others the wish to form relationships with others beyond their peer group was driven by a belief that it could be a potential pathway out of their homelessness. This was a serious aspiration for some of the participants, with several expressing their belief that it might help them find new levels of positivity and the opportunity to improve their world by transgressing their homelessness. Unfortunately many found forming relationships of any importance or depth with those outside the homeless community really difficult, seemingly unable to cross the gulf that can exist between homeless people and homed people. This was a significant insight of this study, showing not just the difficulty that some had in doing this but also the ease with which others were able to achieve this. The reasons for this seemed to rest upon the level of self-confidence, and specifically self-efficacy, the participant had. Here those who dwelled upon their homelessness, feeling it was an outcome of their failings, appeared to lack self-belief that others outside their peer group would want to have a relationship with them. This inability to form relationships has received some attention in the literature (Rokach 2004, Sanders and Brown, 2015, Sumerlin, 1995), with specific reference to the isolation and loneliness that many homeless people can experience. However the potential contributory factors of self-confidence or self-efficacy appear to have received less attention. Those able to bridge the gap between homeless people and non-homeless people seemed to carry quite a different outlook to their circumstance, treating their homelessness with little concern and associating neither shame or stigma with it.

Another element of this phenomenon of the desire for friendships beyond their peer group was the success that many of the participants had in forming relationships with centre staff, nurses, care workers and teachers. These relationships were cherished by the participants and spoken about with fondness and joy. They were relationships that were important to the participants, but they also lacked mutuality or real intimacy, where they appeared to simply be the professional nurse, teacher or support worker doing their job well and showing some care, empathy or interest in a patient, student or client. However, despite this, these relationships made a world of difference to many of the participants, countering a little of the loneliness or isolation they felt in their lives.

The final phenomenon considered in Chapter Five examined the relationships the participants had with the places they encountered, including the places they lived and the other places they spent time in, such

as libraries and the drop-in centre. The places where the participants lived and slept were diverse, ranging from rough sleeping to council provided accommodation such as a flat. Several also lived or had lived in homeless hostels, which were usually run by a charity. Much has been written about living in homeless hostels (for example Desjarlais, 1997, Holt et al., 2011, Hopper, 2003), showing not only the diversity of regimes that can be encountered but also the lived experience of those who use them. This study found many similarities with the extant research, particularly with respect to the problems of hostel living. However, where this study moved beyond existing research was in examining the feeling of liminality that many of the participants experienced when living in a hostel. Current research shows that many homeless people do not feel that a hostel is a home, but in this study this experience was developed and showed how many felt it was purely a transitional period of their lives. They were places of only temporary accommodation and, despite some of the hardships or problems encountered in using them, they were places of ambivalence and purely a temporary solution to their circumstance, even when a person spent a long time living there.

Of more importance perhaps was how the participants brought new meaning to the places they frequented. Places that were mundane and commonplace became spaces of meaning, joy and respite for them as they spent time in them. The drop-in centre that many of the participants frequented regularly became a place which was special and important to them, bringing companionship and meaning to their lives. Its rather bleak and drab appearance went un-noticed or was of little concern to the participants compared to the opportunity to relax, feel safe and spend some time with others without fear or worry. For some of the participants it was a kind of sanctuary, with many sharing some real concern about its long-term sustainability and the impact its closing would have on them. Previous research into homelessness shows clearly that homeless people may interact positively with their environments in order to make them feel safer, better and more habitable (Hodgetts et al., 2010, Hopper, 2003, Stolte and Hodgetts, 2013). This includes their interaction with those places that they share with the non-homeless community, something that can "mitigate against [the] marginalization" (Hodgetts et al., 2008, p.935) they frequently encounter. The drop-in centre was a special place for the participants and this shows how little is needed to make their lives better.

Another place that brought meaning to the participants was libraries, something that has also been looked at in the literature (for example, Ayers 2006, Hodgetts et al., 2010). The value of these

institutions and the frequent difficulty of accessing them is well documented, however this study illuminated more than simply the value they can bring to homeless people's lives, showing that these places had the power to captivate the mind and enable escape from problems for a moment. For one particular participant the library became a place that filled his heart with wonder as he read the hitherto unknown to him works of Shakespeare or fired his imagination as he ploughed his way through science fiction such as *Star Wars*. Libraries, it seems, had the potential to provide a gateway to learning, wonder and imaginative escape to a population that is often deliberately restricted or discouraged from using their services. They are another example of the paradoxical world that homeless people appear to reside within.

Chapter Five brought some new perspective to the places that homeless people use, illustrating the importance to their lives of having somewhere to rest, recuperate, interact with others in the social world and find new meaning. It further revealed how homeless people can construct new meanings and ultimately gain the possibility of making their lives better or more tolerable through the places they frequent.

7.4 Types of Work, Dealing with Being Homeless, and the Struggle for Agency

Chapter Six, the final chapter of the findings, examined the types of work the participants did, how they dealt with being homeless, and their struggle for agency. These represent some of the more insightful elements of this study, bringing into question not just some of the literature on homelessness but some of the wider views of homelessness held by the general population. The first of these phenomena was the work the participants undertook, which is examined next.

The idea that homeless people spend their time doing work, applying effort and commitment, is not something typically considered in the literature, at least beyond selling street newspapers or undertaking some casual labour. However this study reveals a lifeworld of the participants where some of them regularly applied themselves to a range of activities that impacted their lives in important and in some cases meaningful ways.

During the analysis of the findings it became clear that many of the participants were leading busy and productive lives. The view of what they did, how they described these activities and also my impression of how busy some of them seemed to be showed that although frequently plagued with boredom and other forms of deprivation, several of the participants were very motivated to expend often considerable effort doing various types of work. For some this was a situation driven by necessity, such as satisfying the Job Centre requirements, but for others it was much more, with these activities being a form of self-expression or meaning giving. They share much in common with notions of work or serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) in terms of how they undertook and experienced these activities. For example Moorhouse's (1987) writings about the USA Hot Rod culture in the 1940s and 50s shows some striking similarities. Moorhouse says that the Hot Rod culture was carried out as "personally-chosen projects, not connected to paid labour: [it is] 'work' as hobby, as relaxation, as fascination, as something you really want to do rather than being forced to do" (1987, p.256). For the participants their art, craft and creative music activities seemed to resemble much in Moorhouse's description, activities beyond the mere casual, requiring a significant amount of effort and commitment, activities that they worked hard at. They were activities that "provide[d]… [their] lives with content" (Svendsen, 2016, p.34) and meaning.

As crafts and hobbies could transform, at least temporarily, the lives of the participants, so could the voluntary work that several of the participants undertook. Voluntary working for CRISIS, doing litter picks or supporting other homeless people with their IT needs were activities that the participants took joy in engaging in and talking about, they were activities that they seemed genuinely proud of. Even Bill's unsuccessful attempt to get a volunteer job at the animal sanctuary hints at his desire to engage in an activity, something to work at, that would bring "something else in" (Bill) his life.

This study suggests that many of the activities the participants undertook were important parts of their lives, requiring often significant effort and commitment. They were activities they spent time doing, which in the process helped them uncover new meaning and self-worth. Even the activities that were forced upon them through necessity or circumstances, such as dealing with the Job Centre, they knuckled down and did what was required. It is an insight into the world of some of the participants that goes against some of the general and popular discourse that sees homeless people as 'work-shy' and not "'useful' and/or functional members of… [society] since they do not actively work and support the system"

(Belcher and DeForge, 2012, p.934). This study shows that the situation is more nuanced and that at least some homeless people are not only able and willing to undertake various types of work, they are also willing to apply significant effort over long periods of time to doing this.

The next phenomenon examined in Chapter Six was how the participants dealt with being homeless, specifically with the hardship that their lives involved. It is a chapter that shows the efforts that the participants applied to staying afloat and out of reach of the problems that they were constantly surrounded with, such as the potential for new trauma, illness and addiction. It was an experience centred around their "ability to maintain a stable equilibrium" (Bonanno, 2004, p.20) against the challenges of their lives. They achieved this again through art, music and a variety of other creative activities. These activities seemed to be a tonic that provided the fortitude for the participants to carry on, helping them to keep ahead of their past and for some to move forward. However, this chapter also showed that not all the participants were successful at doing this, and that dealing with being homeless was a precarious act, where at any moment they could fail and be plunged backward into depression, unhappiness and addiction.

The final phenomenon examined in Chapter Six was the struggle for personal agency. This concerns the experience of participants trying to take (back) control of their lives. I have shown that within the literature on homelessness there is a branch that ascribes homelessness to the personal choice/foibles of the individual (for example Parsell and Parsell, 2012, Rubenstein, 1992 Ward, 1979). This view paints homeless people as making poor and irrational choices that compound their circumstances and make moving back into the world of the homed more difficult. This study certainly does not deny that homeless people often make poor choices, however my findings suggest a different way of understanding their lived experience, one that showed the participants striving to take control of their lives and seeking to exert personal agency upon the circumstances of their world.

Several examples of the participants trying to gain personal agency were examined in this chapter, including dealing with the challenges of satisfying the Job Centre requirements for receiving benefits. The regimes of these places were felt by many of the participants to be onerous, difficult and frequently unfair, and several participants mounted efforts to thwart the control that these places had upon them. The success they had varied, but these were indicative acts that showed the importance that many

placed upon having more control over their lives. A further example of striving for personal agency was the issue of refusing hostel accommodation in favour of the street. This has been discussed widely in the literature (for examples, Lafuente and Lane, 1995, Rokach, 2004, Sanders and Brown, 2015) with much of this centred around the problems of hostel life, including the potential for violence and the loss of autonomy. In this study it was clear that many of the participants felt the regimes of the hostel, including the simple factor of not being able to come and go as one pleased, made these places unpalatable. However this study goes beyond simply showing that to not stay in a hostel can be a reasonable and rational choice for some, and suggests that it is actually symbolic of a wider need for homeless people to gain some level of personal agency, a phenomenon that many of the participants felt they had lost as a result of their homelessness. During the course of this study the level of difficulty that many of the participants experienced with respect to control of their lives and personal agency, was a clear realisation, something discussed across the literature (for example, Desjarlais, 1997, McNaughton, 2008, Stolte and Hodgetts, 2013). However, this study illustrates that this is a widespread occurrence across many aspects of their lives. It also illustrated how ingenious many of the participants were in trying to recover or at least gain some control over their lives.

7.5 Exploring the Findings in the Context of the Phenomenological Literature

In this section I will discuss the findings of this study in relation to the phenomenological literature (Chapter Two, Section 2.3.3.) in order to draw out the similarities and differences, and in doing so bring further insight to the lived experience of the participants.

7.5.1 Isolation, Intimacy and Friendship

One of the most prominent and influential elements of the intersubjective experience of the participants was the isolation that many of them felt, which was a poignant and at times depressing experience. For example Jonathan said he'd had "no-one to talk to since [his] uncle died" and continued by saying "nobody cares about you." He is a man alone, a man surrounded by people in the drop-in centre, a man

who works at helping other homeless men navigate the benefits system online, but despite all this he feels lonely and isolated. It is an experience mirrored by many of the participants, for example when Colin says he "has no friends" and Frank talks about "missing my friends". Isolation was a real and palpable experience for many of the participants: a phenomenon of the intersubjective world that encroached upon their lives, bringing sadness with respect to friendships long gone and regret for the present and being alone. It is an experience commented on across the literature and one highlighted in several of the phenomenological studies reviewed. For example Watts (2012) talks about this in terms of being "'adrift' and disconnected, both from their former selves and the people around them" (p.113), and Lafuente and Lane (1995) suggest that homelessness is characterised by "feelings of being detached, alone, and being dependent on others for support" (p.216). This study shares these arguments but also builds upon them to show how isolation not only impacts the individual but can totally overshadow their already bleak worlds. This was an experience dramatically illuminated by Jonathan when he said "you could fall into the canal and drown, and nobody would notice the difference". It is an isolation of indifference, where you feel you no longer matter to anyone else in the world.

The experience of isolation becomes more intriguing as its paradoxical nature is revealed. This isolation might be thought of as a consequence of having no opportunity to develop friendships or intimacy with others, but this was not the case. The participants were surrounded by other men much like themselves, but friendship was not only rejected but actively avoided. This avoidance was closely examined in Chapter Five, Section 5.3, and also in Section 7.3. It is something mirrored in the Holt et al. (2011) study, where it is shown that other homeless people were avoided as a self-imposed strategy to mitigate the "threat to material safety, threat to self-identity and threat to autonomy" (p. 493). It is a finding that concurs with this study, but where a different path is taken is in revealing how this paradox is experienced and how it is that the position of detestable isolation can be held while avoiding the possibility of friendship with other homeless people. It seems that the participants were willing to put up with their isolation and the angst it brought them because they felt that the consequence of forming friendships with other homeless people was not just fraught but could be toxic to their overall well-being. For example, talking about other homeless people, Bill says, "I'm never going to get too close to people", although he also feels like he is "stuck in the same pond" as them. Jonathan describes other homeless people in the following way: "I wouldn't trust most of this lot as far as you could throw them." Lafuente and Lane (1995) provide a similar account when they say that homeless people "cope by not

trusting others" (p.216). The participants are clearly caught in a dilemma, stuck between the pain of isolation on the one hand and the risk to their well-being from friendship with other homeless people on the other.

7.5.2 Relationships with Others

This intersubjective paradox develops further when this seemingly self-inflicted isolation runs up against the unfulfilled desire for intimacy and friendship. A desire for friendship beyond their homeless peer group, with the homed population is an experience examined at some length in Chapter Five, Section 5.2. The desire to form connections with others beyond the homeless population is highlighted across the literature as an important ambition for homeless people. Holt et al. (2011) suggest that forming new connections and relationships is a critical element of their lived experience, going on to show how the lack of connection with others was something that their participants had experienced even before becoming homeless. This study explores a different avenue by looking at not just the ambition to form relationships with non-homeless people but how that connection is experienced when it takes place, when the dilemma outlined above is resolved, even for just a moment. This is most clear when it led to the participants experiencing self-improvement and growth, when the connection they made with others became a catalyst for transformation. Chapter Four, Section 4.3, explores this and illustrates how the sensitive words of a teacher, nurse or others could unlock hitherto unknown abilities in music or aid the discovery of a new passion. Both Davies' (2012) and Petrovich and Cronley's (2015) studies provide some compelling examples of how homeless people are able to grow and transform, which they see as an activity driven by self-reflection rather than an act facilitated by someone else. This study reveals something different, showing instead how other people facilitated the transformation. It also shows how a few words of encouragement or feedback could be the spark for self-improvement and growth, for example, when Bills talks about beginning an art class he says, "I'm actually having feedback on [it], good feedback, instead of people always being negative to me." This means a lot to him, with his passion for art coming up again and again across his interviews. This was a facet of himself unknown until his efforts received some recognition. Another example of this was receiving a positive reaction from the audience when he did some amateur theatre. He says of the experience, "yeah, I've impressed somebody that

don't even know me? I feel brilliant," a reaction that also seems to spur him forward. Even the potential for this kind of affirmation impacted the lived experience of the participants. For example James longingly waiting for some feedback on his simple art portfolio says, "after the class I showed him my artwork, uh, that booklet thing like, and, uh, I'm waiting for them to get back in touch with me now". His desire for positive feedback is like tinder just waiting for the right spark to ignite.

For some of the participants their relationships with their teachers and others produced remarkable moments of transformation, but this study also brings to light the more mundane moments, where connection to those beyond their homeless peer group made a positive difference. For example Jonathan speaks about the support workers at the drop-in centre as follows, "it's very reassuring to know if I do want to talk to somebody, I've just got to sort of go "excuse me, you know, so and so, can I have ten minutes?" This is not a moment of change or transformation for Jonathan, as it is something more ordinary, but it is equally important because now if Jonathan encounters difficulties he knows someone would care.

This type of experience, these small acts of kindness, consideration or even the withholding of negative judgement, were acts cherished by the participants. For example when Ryan talks about the support workers at the drop-in centre he says, "[they are] brilliant… they're non-judgmental, they try and understand how you are feeling… they offer support." Of course, the self-improvement and transformations that some of the participants experience, generated or facilitated by a teacher, nurse or others, were remarkable and show a side to homeless people's experiencing of the world little seen in the literature. However, the intersubjective world of the participants in this study was typically more dreary and banal than these moments of transformation might suggest. These last examples of isolation and loneliness being breached through the willingness of support workers, nurses and others to listen and treat the participants with a little care and humanity, unremarkable as they may seem, are also the most compelling. They reveal a lived experience barren of warmth and consideration from others, something many of us would take for granted. This is a world that can become a little brighter when the non-homeless population are prepared to treat homeless people with just a little humanity. This is a key element of the intersubjective world of homeless people, something at the heart of this study.

Before closing this section there is one final element of the relationships with others that requires mentioning, one that was also present in Petrovich and Cronley's study. This was the reliance on other homeless people for help and support, a phenomenon that was not present in this study and would seem to contradict its theme of avoiding intimacy and friendship with other homeless people (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.). However, this is probably due to a different type of homelessness being focussed on by Petrovich and Cronley. In their study they explored the experience of people rough sleeping, a group of people who appeared to rely heavily upon each other to remain safe and well. For example one of their participants says, "we all protect each other. It's like a mutual fucking agreement, you know what I mean? When I'm around someone I care about I protect, I protect them, and they protect me when I'm vulnerable" (Petrovich and Cronley, 2015, p.317). This is not an unknown feature of the lives of homeless people, particularly rough sleepers, and Petrovich and Cronley provide a glimpse of how this kind of homeless population experience help and support from each other. It is a point they clearly make about a homeless population who are faced with some unique challenges from sleeping rough, requiring them to operate differently to the predominantly housed population of this study.

7.5.3 Coping with the Challenges of Homelessness

Returning to the phenomenological literature, several authors have examined how homeless people cope with challenges in their lives. Watts (2012) showed that several of her participants applied clear strategies to cope with being homeless, including a "strategy of misuse…denial and avoidance (of their situation) … The coping strategy of planning for the future as an optimistic approach [to their circumstances]" (p.117) and one whereby they could "combat the sense of disempowerment created by the situation [of being homeless]" (p.121). This last point reflects the ambition that several of the participants in this study showed towards changing their intersubjective worlds, an ambition that seemed to provide some succour in their present situation and a boost to their self-worth. For example, Ryan talks about wanting to help the charity CRISIS, saying, "I would like to sort of give something back to CRISIS, what they've given to me. So, they have changed my life around. I wouldn't be sat here." Ryan wants to pay CRISIS back, return the opportunity they gave him. It is an experience aimed at positively impacting his intersubjective existence, an ambition like Watts's commentary above, that could help him cope with the problems he faced every day and also lead to him feeling better about himself.

Art and crafts were a way to cope with the challenges of homelessness, providing routine, focus and meaning. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Section 4.3., but there is another element to this that is relevant here, and that is how these activities seemed to provide a bridge between the participants and other homeless people. For example Colin talks about the benefit of learning the bass guitar saying, "I, I feel, I feel great, because, I can participate in um, in conversations in that, um, I feel part of, part of the conversations now, instead of saying, like, oh yeah, it's a guitar. Right." Colin, someone who had already shared his struggles socialising with others, suddenly feels he has something to talk about, a topic that others can relate to, which means they can also relate to him. For Colin this is a breakthrough, as he has something good to talk about and now he can interact socially with his peer group. Already we have shown that connecting with others could be a challenge for homeless people, with Holt et al. (2011) providing a typical example of this from one of their participants who says, "there's nobody at the moment that I feel that close to or that I'd need to feel close to, let's put it that way." Colin's experience illustrates something subtly different, with it being not about him getting close to other homeless people but instead fitting in. This is a desire that contradicts the efforts to avoid intimacy with other homeless people discussed above and can be contrasted to Davies's findings (2011) that some homeless people cope by trying to distance themselves from other homeless people, because of being "anxious and fearful that this may be a reflection of their future selves" (p.26). For Colin this experience can be understood quite simply, as he just wants to be able to have something interesting to share and talk about with those he sits with at the drop-in centre. When you have nothing but anguish, pain, bouts of depression and struggles with drink, then finding a light and interesting topic such as playing bass guitar to talk to others about is a godsend. This is again one of those small and innocuous experiences that populated this study, moments in the lives of the participants that were neither dramatic nor extraordinary, but which helped make their lives a little more bearable.

7.5.4 Boredom and Monotony

The boredom and the monotony of being homeless were key features of the lived experience of the participants, phenomena experienced heavily in their temporal world. This was examined in detail in

Chapter Four, Section 4.1.1. It was also a phenomenon that came up in Holt et al.'s 2011 study, where they identified how hostel life could be monotonous, described by one of their participants as follows, "it seems to be the same, day after day after day" (p.493). Some of the participants in this study expressed similar feelings about their lives. For example Ryan says, "If I just sit around I get really bored very quickly, and" Tony explains the same sentiment but more bluntly when he describes his life by saying, "I'll just get bored and drunk." Having nothing constructive or meaningful to do with their time was an issue for many of the participants of this study, with this being an experience less about the monotony and more about being bereft of things to do, an absence of activities to occupy minds and bodies, a temporal world achingly empty of routine and stimulation.

Holt et al. continue their discussion of the monotony of hostel life to show how it could be overcome by their participants "by getting out of the hostel, taking classes… and pursuing hobbies and pastimes (2011, p.493). This is not just about their participants escaping from the tedium of hostel life, but also about filling their time with something interesting to do. This is a point mirrored in this study and discussed at length in Chapter Four, Section 4.3. However, here I would like to share some of the more ordinary, and perhaps more typical, examples of filling time and escaping the tedium, monotony or boredom that the participants faced. This is also briefly reflected upon in the Lafuente and Lane (1995) study, when they reveal some of the everyday experience of their participants saying, "a few of these men went to church and prayed, others went to the library, and some passed the time by reading and wandering on the streets" (p.214). The example of Tony doing crosswords illustrates a similar lived experience to Lafuente and Lane's example, and he describes this in the following way, "in the woods in the day light. I- I love me crossword." Tony loves doing crosswords, a pastime only limited by the available daylight and his luck in finding an appropriate discarded newspaper. Another way that time was filled by the participants was through eating, drinking tea and generally hanging out at the drop-in centre. It was a place of many things, explored in depth in Chapter Five, Section 5.3, but it was also a place to just go and spend time. For example Bill says, "most of my day consists of [going to] the drop-in centre... for a coffee and a chat… and toast." There is nothing remarkable here, many of us spend time in a coffee shop, tea house or café. Of course the drop-in centre is free and provides other services, but for the homeless men of this study first and foremost it was a place to spend some time drinking tea and eating toast in the company of others. It was for Jonathan and others a place to go "for something to do."

Holt et al. (2011) suggest that efforts to survive hostel life and build self-esteem could all contribute to boredom being averted, saying that these "set of strategies to enhance self-esteem appeared to serve the function of avoiding boredom" (p.495). This study shows how in addition to the relief of boredom the activities of painting, singing, theatre and so on also provided a sense of personal worth. For example Colin talks about the help CRISIS has given him with all the classes they run, saying "CRISIS has brought all the creativity out of me that's always been locked up inside and never been able to find an avenue to bring it out and now it's just like ... Boom, yeah? It ... It's brilliant." Finding something to fill his time, activities requiring effort and commitment, improves Colin's creativity and makes him feel good. However this study goes further and shows that these hobbies and leisure activities formed part of the lived experience of the participants not just for a moment but over an extended period. For example Bill shares his story of saving up to buy a set of bongos, saying, "I scrapped and saved for a month, maybe two months to get my, my instruments… When, when you start putting two, three pound a week a way you don't miss it. Um, and that, that's another positive thing in my life now. And it's only silly ... It's only a set of bongos but it means a lot to me, you know." Time becomes measured by his saving for the new bongos. It is a gentle filling of his time with something that makes a difference to him, a man moving beyond the day-to-day struggles of being homeless with aspirations of buying his own bongos so that he can practice when away from his class.

7.5.5 Work

The experience of work was a key finding of the study, something explored in detail in Chapter Six, Section 6.1. It is a topic that receives some attention in the phenomenological literature, where for example Holt et al. (2011) address the point in terms of how their participants lost their connection with others through losing their jobs and becoming homeless. Watts (2012) shows how a lack of home can make securing a job much harder. However, it is with Davies's (2012) study that some similarity with the findings in this study occurs, specifically in the example of one of her participants talking about the positive effect of being rehoused at the YMCA and doing voluntary work. She says, "everyone here is supporting and the know what you're going through, I can't tell you how much it's turned my life around. Since I lived here I've started volunteering at a charity shop with the elderly, it feels good to have a purpose you know…got ambition for the future, just everything" (Davies, 2012, p.23). This

mirrors the experience of several of the participants in this study. For example in Chapter Six, Section 6.1. Ryan's example of becoming a volunteer ambassador for CRISIS was shared, something that increased his confidence to move his life forward. He says, "I've got the sort of confidence now where I can stand up and like I … I've become an ambassador now at CRISIS… I feel I'm in a good place now… I feel I'm in a good place." This was a feeling also experienced by Jonathan through volunteering to teach other homeless people how to use computers at the drop-in centre, which he sums up by saying, "yeah. I can do that," and, really enjoyed it." Davies (2012) suggests that her example illustrates how meaningful work can lead to increasing "positive self-regard by having value in a new role" (p.27) and can ameliorate the "harmful psychological effects of homelessness" (p.28). It is a clear point which is reflected in this study through the examples of Ryan and Jonathan above. A good example of this is the litter picking that several of the participants did for the drop-in centre, voluntary work that as Ryan says was scheduled, "normally, on a Monday, we go out for a litter pick." And Jonathan further explains that "we, we do a work party twice a week… [and] this afternoon, we're going out, uh, litter picking." The monotony, boredom and lack of things to do makes being homeless difficult. Having a schedule, a place to be at a certain time, with something worthwhile to do, makes a difference. For Ryan, Jonathan and the other participants the litter pick and the other voluntary work they undertook not only made them feel better about themselves but also filled their time, breaking up their week with things to look forward to or plan for. Voluntary work was good for the participants because it gave them a sense of purpose and also routine.

7.6 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

This study was informed by the hermeneutic phenomenology of Max van Manen (1990, 2014), a methodology that enables the lifeworld of others to be brought forth and understood. It is an approach that relies heavily upon the application of epoché and the phenomenological reduction to reveal the lived experience. Van Manen's method provided much of the theoretical underpinning for this study, as well as the practical framework, and although his methods are not geared specifically to phenomenological psychological research they do offer an accessible and robust approach to conducting such research. Through rich examples he illustrates how to reveal the lived experience of others and

also how to bring clarity and understanding to this through good phenomenological writing. Therefore I would suggest that for both the phenomenological novice and the more experienced practitioner his hermeneutic phenomenological method is both an accessible and a thoughtful way to undertake psychological phenomenological research. It has provided some of the key theoretical and practical underpinnings for this study.

7.7 Implications for Social Policy

In this section I draw upon my findings to critique some of the attitudes and beliefs that surround the framing of homelessness and discuss some of the typical responses employed by the UK State to deal with homelessness. Through this phenomenological study of homelessness the realities of the lived experience of the participants, and potentially the wider population of homeless people (this would require further research), are revealed and show that the phenomenon of homelessness can be nuanced and complicated. Furthermore, this study suggests that some of the broad policy measures that are advocated for or implemented may be failing to take into consideration these findings. There are a number of areas that I will specifically address, including the issue of appropriate accommodation, finding meaning, specifically in relation to work, access to professional support and the provision of more personal agency over the decisions that affect their lives.

Before addressing these issues some brief examination of present UK policy towards homelessness is required. The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (implemented 3rd April 2018) is the most recent legislation on homelessness in the UK. It sets out new responsibilities on local housing authorities and other State bodies to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to provide better more tailored support for homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless. It is an Act specifically aimed at reducing the risk of people losing their homes and improving the overall support for homeless people by joining up service provision in this area. It, like the more recent 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), seeks to improve much of what already exists and adds new responsibilities to those of local authorities for dealing with homelessness.

Considering these findings and their social policy implications I will turn first to the provision of accommodation, especially that which is not secure or appropriate. This study suggests that this can be problematic for the well-being of the person, especially when accommodation is forced upon them or they have no choice in it. It shows that giving up street living for hostel accommodation is fraught with issues. Even those participants who had secured individual occupancy accommodation still seemed to be disaffected and struggling with their world. However, the 'streets' are not a home, they are unsafe, inhospitable and dehumanising. Therefore there is a need to find how to provide appropriate accommodation that takes into account the individual and their circumstances. The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act tackles the lack of accommodation for homeless people by stipulating measures that require local authorities to provide secure accommodation to all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of their priority of need. Unfortunately this Act fails to tackle the issue of much hostel accommodation being unsuitable or inappropriate for many homeless people, especially for those who are vulnerable. The 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy does better and discusses in some detail the need for more appropriate and suitable accommodation that reflects the diversity of needs and circumstances of homeless people. It is a step in the right direction and reflects some of the issues that these findings found in regard to accommodation provision.

At the heart of this study was the struggle that many of the participants, and possibly the wider population of homeless people, have in finding meaning in their lives. The ability to access quality education and personal development seemed to be a potential panacea to their frequently blighted lives (see Roy et al. [2017] for more information on the application of occupational therapy to helping homeless people). When it was available it enabled people to grow, feel achievement and re-discover some meaning for their existence. Opportunities for the participants to access these activities were sporadic, sometimes difficult to access, or in other cases prohibited. There is a strong case to be made for much greater emphasis being placed on providing this kind of support for homeless people, something that is inclusive, where they and the homed population could interact on an equal and symbiotic level. These should be activities and opportunities where meaning could be found, constructed and shared, something that could be dovetailed into the provision of wider access to meaningful work, especially voluntary activities such as helping charities and supporting others who are homeless. This study showed clearly the importance that such activities held for many of the participants, but it also revealed how hard it could be for them to achieve, an example highlighted in the study via the case of

Bill and his inability to gain a volunteering position at the local animal sanctuary. The provision of greater opportunities to undertake meaningful voluntary work could lead to a significant improvement in the well-being of homeless people and even change some of the stigma surrounding homelessness. The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act and the 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy are mainly focussed on preventing homelessness and then providing better provision of suitable accommodation. There is some mention of 'recovery' aimed at helping homeless people 'get back on their feet', but this mainly looks at ensuring they have a secure platform based on secure accommodation, to enable them to enter back into some form of paid employment. There is no mention of voluntary work or engagement in activities such as art or writing, that this study has revealed can benefit the well-being of homeless people. It is sadly a missing element from current social policies relating to homelessness.

An additional area of consideration, something only touched upon briefly in this study, is the provision of proper, professional and accessible mental health support. All of the participants had some contact with individuals who tried to provide some level of counselling or mental health support, but this seemed to be inadequate and insufficient for several of them. Without a clinical background it is hard to fully and properly examine this area, but, even accepting the limitations of this study, there does seem sufficient evidence that improving the support here would be beneficial to the well-being of the participants and the wider community of homeless people. The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act does not seek to tackle issues of mental health beyond better accommodation provision, however the 2018 Rough Sleepers Strategy does provide some ideas and information about this, including stressing that the NHS mental health strategy takes into account the different needs and circumstances that rough sleepers face in this regard. There is additional funding of £2 million being made available to fund mental and substance misuse treatment for rough sleepers (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2018, p.10). However this strategy, and again the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act, are aimed primarily at the provision of better accommodation, paying scant attention to the issue of better mental health provision to rough sleepers or the wider population of homeless people.

A final area of social policy that should be reviewed is the loss of personal agency which occurs through becoming homeless. This was a core finding of this study and something recognised in the 2017 Government response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Reports: Homelessness and Homelessness Reduction Bill, bringing attention to this issue, recommending that

homeless "services should put users first with a compassionate approach that gives individuals an element of choice and autonomy (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, 2017, p.16). However, laudable as this recommendation is, neither the Homelessness Reduction Act nor the 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy adopted this and it seems that there is little or no attention paid to ensuring homeless people have more autonomy over their lives. In this study the loss of personal agency was shown to be a prominent issue for homeless people, something that was particularly clear when they had to deal with welfare services, and specifically the seemingly overbearing nature of the Job Centre. With some additional thought and care supporting homeless people through the benefits system and providing an opportunity for them to explain their circumstances in terms appropriate to them would go a long way towards making their lives better. However this raises a final point that needs mentioning regarding social policy and homeless people. What is the purpose of social policy concerning homelessness? Is it to reduce homelessness, prevent it or make its circumstances more tolerable? The confusion or inadequacy of much social policy appears to result from the tensions or confusion between these questions. This study goes beyond these questions and suggests the need to reframe our understanding and appreciation of homelessness, seeing it as something that is both deep and broad in meaning and context, where the lack of appropriate accommodation is only one, and in some cases the least, of the issues surrounding it. This study advocates this reframing, arguing that we see homelessness in a much more holistic and humanistic way, where the value of the lives of this population is properly appreciated and opportunities to bring value to these lives reviewed, as opposed to than the current approach that seeks to change them.

7.8 Limitations of this Study

In a study such as this there are always some limitations, some of which arise from its design and application, while others result from using a phenomenological method. The first issue to consider here is the nature of the participants involved in this study. Early on the decision to focus on single men took place, and there were several reasons for this, as discussed in the introduction (see Chapter One, section 1.3). The results of this choice mean that the phenomenon uncovered may only relate or be exclusive to this demographic and specifically may not be apply to women, younger people and families. Despite

these limitations this study did secure extensive and detailed data on the lived experience of a population that can be hard to access. It provided a clear and vivid picture of experiences little considered in other studies and brought new perspectives to the matter, revealing lifeworlds that were often harsh and difficult, but also contained joy and hope.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of ethnic diversity of the participants, where, with one exception, the participants were all white British men. The reason for this lack of diversity was due to difficulties in recruiting non-white and non-British participants. How this lack of ethnic diversity affected this study is difficult to assess, but this is something that should be taken into account when considering its findings.

A final and significant limitation to this study was its scope and the research questions followed. The intention was to explore and examine the lived world of the participants, and in doing so nine key phenomena were discerned and examined. However, during this study the causes of the participants' homelessness were either offered by the participants or became apparent through the interviews and subsequent data analysis. Across the literature and in the wider debates on homelessness the question of the causes of homelessness is a major concern, and perhaps the most contested and important element of the whole debate surrounding it. I have steered clear of offering either thought on or conclusions about the causes of participants' homelessness. This was a deliberate act, driven by a reluctance to distract from these findings by entering into an area of thought that this study was methodologically not geared towards engaging with. The wisdom of this decision can be contested, but it needs to be drawn to one's attention that the reasons why people become homeless, or specifically why the participants became homeless, were not considered and no conclusions are drawn. In taking this position I have also not engaged in-depth with the potential pathways out of homelessness. This again was something outside the scope of this study, and although some recommendations may be tentatively made for social policy, these are aimed more at improving the lifeworld of people experiencing homelessness rather than moving them back into the world of the homed.

7.9 Further Research Opportunities

This study has provided a glimpse into the lifeworld of nine participants who were experiencing some level of homelessness. The themes of boredom, shame and self-improvement, people and place, types of work, dealing with homelessness, and the struggle for agency were examined and revealed lives that were complicated and multi-faceted. The opportunity to further reveal how homeless people experience their world is infinite, but there are several areas that this study may provide both the interest and opportunity to further examine, including:

1. This research was limited to men, predominantly white British men and mainly those of mid to late middle age, due to the predominance of this ethnicity and demographic in the setting that was used for this study. There is, therefore, the opportunity to undertake similar research with a much wider demographic pool, potentially revealing new insights and understandings from a wider sample.

2. Further exploration into how homeless people create meaning and value in their lives may prove valuable. A significant finding of this study was the search for, and in some cases the realisation of new meaning and self-worth through the activities of work, hobbies and relationships. In the wider research literature homelessness is typically viewed as a condition to escape from or to be endured. This study certainly confirms that homelessness can be a brutal and unforgiving way of life, but there were also moments where the lives of the participants were filled with promise and meaning.

3. An additional area that could provide further insight is how the concept of work can be applied to the experience of being homeless. This study examined how the participants spent time working. It showed that dismissing homeless people as not working is both over-simplistic and fails to recognise the time and effort they may put into doing activities, serious leisure and voluntary work. Further study into this area, including a deeper review of the notion of work and how it could be applied to the many things homeless people participate in, may bring additional new and important insights.

4. A final area of further research that could build on this study would be into the nature of the relationships that homeless people have with the homed population. There is quite a wide body

of research into the relationships homeless people have with other homeless people (for exampls, Barker et al., 2018, Neale and Brown, 2016, McCarthy and Hagan, 1992). However this study revealed both the importance and difficulty that many of the participants had with forming and maintain relationships outside their peer group and beyond the charitable or professional help they received.

7.10 Conclusions

This study set out to reveal some of the key aspects of the everyday experience of a small group of homeless men. It demonstrates the need to move the debate and rhetoric beyond the demonisation of homelessness, a position that sees it and those experiencing it purely in terms of a social problem in need of being fixed. At best this viewpoint seems an oversimplification of the issue and at worst it leads to further marginalisation of the population. Certainly, the lifeworlds of the participants contained difficulties, some that were harsh and debilitating, but their lack of a home was not the most serious or a singular defining feature of their world. Therefore viewing them negatively because of their lack of accommodation reduces them to something less, acting as a kind of 'othering' of them and the wider homeless population, something that "encompasses the many expressions of prejudice… that propagate group-based inequality and marginality" (Powell and Menendian, 2016, p.17).

Several authors (Gerrard and Farrugia, 2015, Feldman, 2004) suggest that this 'othering' of homeless people has its roots within the socio-economic circumstances of the prevailing culture. For example, Gerrard and Farrugia (2015) provide a powerful account of how "homelessness is 'out of joint' to the spatial and aesthetic logic of capital and commodity consumption and performance" (p.2219). They argue convincingly that homelessness is a "disturbance" (ibid) to the consumerism deemed normative by neo-liberal capitalist societies. This framing of homelessness, and specifically the marginalisation of homeless people, is therefore a political consequence of the economic-political context of society. Feldman and others offer a critique of the very nature of how homelessness is framed, seeing it in terms beyond simply poverty, marginalisation or the denial of economic resource. They offer a radical perspective that is at odds with the current rhetoric, a position that suggests there is something inherently amiss with

the socio-economic system and the discourse representing it. Others have mirrored this finding by drawing on Foucault (1926–1984) and his theories of discourse and power, where homelessness can be viewed as "constructed within social relations of power that totalise subordinated groups at the expense of a more thorough exploration of their heterogeneity" (Horsell, 2006, p.214). These lines of inquiry have resonance with this study and suggest a way of viewing people who are homeless in a much broader and more sophisticated manner, where they are not seen as simply diminished humans, but instead as people who strive for meaning and value in their lives. They are people facing hardship that may be beyond their resources, wit or capability to overcome, but they lead lives that matter to them and their demonisation does not serves them and renders those of us more fortunate a little less too.

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Appendices

1. Piloting Schedule and Feedback from Participants

No.	Date	Duration	Notes
1.	23/02/2015	30 minutes	Interview with a young German man who had only recently become homeless. He provided some detail commentary about what to expect when interviewing homeless people, with the main thought being that the people I will meet will be quite different from each other.
2.	23/02/2015	30 minutes	Interview with a white man in his thirties who did not give any details about his circumstances. He explained carefully how the people I will interview will not trust me and that trust will need to be earnt by me if I am to be successful. He also advised me of the need to treat the potential participants sensitively and give them enough time to answer my questions.
3.	23/02/2015	25 minutes	Interview with one of the people who eventually became a participant for this study. He was interested in the reasons for my intended study. He then discussed how many of the potential participants may feel like failures which I should be careful about discussing.
4.	23/02/2015	20 minutes	Another interview with a person who eventually became a participant of this study. Rather than discussing the questions I had and how potential participants may respond, he answered the questions as if they were directed at him. This data was not included in this study as pilot interviews were not recorded.
5.	26/02/2015	20 minutes	Another interview with a person who eventually became a participant of this study. Much of this interview became focussed on the methodology for the study, including whether the participants would receive a copy of their transcribed interviews.

6.	05/03/2015	30 minutes	Interview with a man of mixed ethnicity in his thirties. This interview ended up becoming a detailed description of why he thought people became homeless and what could be done to counter this. He did offer advice about treating the participants carefully and how I would need to build trust to get them to answer honestly my questions.
7.	05/03/2015	15 minutes	Interview with a white man in his mid-forties. This was the most incoherent interview of the pilots. It consisted of the participant explaining many aspects of homelessness but with little connection to any questions I asked or any clear thoughts being made.

2. Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

'A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS: THE EFFECT OF LABOUR'

2015 - Researcher - STEVE KELSEY - Open University, Milton Keynes

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

This research intends to explore and describe the real lived experiences of individuals who have experienced homelessness and how the various aspects of labour or work affect this.

INVITATION

You are being asked to take part in a psychological research study on being homeless over the coming 18 months. I am a part-time PhD student at the Open University, which is the overseeing body for this research and its ethics committee has approved this study. My supervisor is Dr Darren Langdridge.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to attend approximately six 60-minute interviews where you will be invited to discuss various aspects of you present and previous life experiences. The aim of this research will be to understand how you have experienced being without a home and the effect of work or labour upon this. This is a phenomenological study, meaning that there will be no judgement of you or your experience. Instead it will seek to see the world you live in from your perspective.

You will not have to discuss or disclose anything you do not wish to and your well-being will be at the forefront of this study at all times, meaning that the interviews can be terminated at any time you wish.

The interviews will be recorded and later transcribed (written up), but here as with the rest of the study your identity will be protected, including not using your name.

PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed up to the date when it is published. You will still be paid for your contribution as discussed below.

You also have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you (as appropriate, "and without penalty").

You have the right to have your questions about the procedure answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the interview begins.

COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary, however you receive either a voucher or travel card per session of a rate to be finalised with the management of the centre.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data collected will not contain reference to your identity. No one will link the data you provided to the identifying information you supplied to you except the researcher. Your experiences and the stories you tell may be published, but locations, names and people will be completed anonymised.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Dr Darren Langdridge will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact him at the Open University 01908 652352 or by email at darren.langdridge@open.ac.uk

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Please check each box to show you have read and accept each point:

(1) You have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet - ☐

(2) Questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily - ☐

(3) You are aware of the potential risks (if any) - ☐

(4) You are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion) - ☐

(5) You are aware that you can withdraw any data (including the audio recordings and associated transcripts) from the research study at any time up till the research is published - circa 2018 - ☐

(6) You are aware that you can withdraw yourself from the study at any time, without consequences at any time up until the end of the study - circa April 2016 - ☐

By signing below, you are agreeing to the above and your overall participation in the study and the use of your data:

_____

Participant's Name (Printed)*

_____

_____

Participant's signature* Date

_____

_____

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed) Signature of person obtaining consent

3. Research Overview

The Open University PhD Psychological Research Overview

Researcher: Steve Kelsey
Date: January 2015

Research Topic - A psychological study of people who are homeless: the effect of labour

Research Conducted - by Steve Kelsey - through the Open University, UK

Research Aims - to explore and describe the real lived experiences of individuals who have experienced homelessness and how the various aspects of labour or work affect this.

Research Description - much has been written on homelessness by both academics and those who have directly experienced homelessness. However, for the majority of society the real lived experiences of those who are homeless is neither understood nor seen as important. The present socio-political context has done little to alleviate or improve this situation and does not seem overly interested in changing this.

My research will bring to life the lives of real people who have experienced homelessness, looking at how they really experience the day-to-day lives. My research will describe these lives using the real words of the individuals who experience homelessness and so bringing new understanding and thought to the issues that they experience.

Time in the research will also be given to understanding how people without homes undertake labour; be this paid work, the work to maintain and develop relationships and other forms of labour to support themselves and others.

Through analysis of the descriptions of the lived experiences of those who have shared their stories I aim to draw some conclusions, that may show that homelessness and the people who experience it, are not homogenous or the same. Instead they live varied lives, rich in experience and story.

Research Method - the research will take about 18 months. The lives of between 8 to 12 individuals who have experienced homelessness will be studied through one to one interviews over regular periods. These interviews will be held in private and last between about 60 minutes in length. The interviews will be relaxed and informal. They will also be **recorded**, so that the conversations can be fully transcribed (written up) and used in the research and possibly published in the future. These transcripts will be anonymised meaning the identity of the speaker will be changed.

Ethical Framework - throughout the research the well-being of the individuals who share their experiences and stories will be ensured and full confidentiality of the interviews maintained.

4. Drop-In Centre Inclusion Policy

INCLUSION POLICY
(including reinclusion)

Reviewed and Revised December 2013

[redacted] as an employer is legally required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to provide a safe working environment and to establish safe working practices.

Employees and Volunteers have a responsibility under the Act to take reasonable care to avoid injury to themselves or to others by their work activities and to co-operate with [redacted] and others in meeting statutory requirements.

1. DEFINITION

[redacted] offers support to people who are often socially excluded, including being excluded from other service providers. In the event of an incident or behaviour that leads to service user exclusion we consider it good practice that steps are in place for re-inclusion to access services. This procedure details action that can be taken to promote re-inclusion to our services.

Reasons for exclusion include :

- Verbal aggression – offensive language and threats of violence.
- Acts of violence, physical aggression and damage to property.
- Violent acts using a weapon.
- Sexual, gender, racial, age-related or any other offensive remarks, language or taunts.
- Intimidation of other service users, staff and volunteers.
- Any other act that is considered to be abusive.

2. EXCLUSION POLICY

- If the incident reported is considered minor a Coordinator/Manager will speak to those involved to advise their behaviour is not acceptable and determine what action to take. If the behaviour persists the service user involved will be asked to leave the project for the remainder of the day.
- Persistent or more serious incidents must be reported immediately to a Manager. The service user will be asked to leave and advised they must meet with a Manager prior to attending further support appointments or Drop In services.

- A meeting will be planned with the service user(s), Coordinator and Support worker to discuss the incident. The final decision on any action to be taken will be agreed with the Operations Manager.
- If a service user is excluded they must attend an agreed number of key work sessions prior to accessing the service again. Failure to attend will extend the period of exclusion.
- All decisions agreed must be logged in handover / day book. All decisions agreed should be confirmed in writing by the Coordinator/Operational Manager. If the service user believes the action taken is unfair they should be given the opportunity to appeal against it, and the appeal should be made in writing to the Operations Manager first and then Chief Executive. Appropriate support should be given to the service user to write and lodge an appeal if needed.

3. REVIEW OF EXCLUSIONS

- All exclusions from the service will detail a minimum review time/date.
- The service user should be offered the opportunity to provide any information they would like to be considered at their review.
- Review every six months long term/ serious risk exclusions.

The review process should consider the following:

- Compliance with the suspension.
- Attendance of Key work sessions or meeting with the Coordinator.
- Information provided by the service user.
- Additional information from internal/external sources.

A manager must ensure if appropriate a revised written Risk Assessment is undertaken and held on file.

4. EXCLUSION PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

- **Verbal Abuse:** Staff advise the service user this is not appropriate. Persistent verbal abuse must be reported immediately to a Coordinator or Manager.
- **Physical contact/abuse :** if minor advise as above. Persistent or serious physical contact/abuse must be reported immediately to a Manager who will take appropriate action.
- All information must be recorded in the appropriate logs.

- **Refusal to leave the premises:** all staff in a calm manner should where possible ensure a clear path of exit for the service user. Staff should observe the area surrounding the service user to ensure they are aware of any further issues that may begin to escalate in the vicinity.

- If a service user persistently refuses to leave the Coordinator/Manager will indicate to staff to call the police. At this stage the Coordinator/Manager should be the only person negotiating with the service user; the Coordinator/Manager will request the support of other staff if necessary.

- **There should be no attempt by staff to restrain or make physical contact with the service user unless it is in self defence or to prevent harm to the service user or others.**

- If the service user leaves voluntarily the call made to police may be cancelled. The call to police will not be cancelled if the nature of the incident means a formal complaint needs to be lodged and statements taken.

Serious incidents

- If anyone on site is physically assaulted in all instances the police will be called.
- A debriefing session will take place with staff and volunteers following any serious incident. Individual support will be offered to staff as appropriate.

Major & Serious Incidents

- Exclusion will be agreed following consultation between all those affected by the incident. The Coordinators, Operations Manager and Chief Executive will determine any future access to support services following the undertaking of a Risk Assessment.

Note : All staff and Volunteers have a responsibility to read the [redacted] Health & Safety Policy & Procedures. Failure to not abide by them is a serious matter that may lead to formal action being taken.

RELATED POLICIES

Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
Harassment and bullying Policy
Conflict Aggression Policy
Health and Safety Policy

5. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Next review due in 2013.

5. Drop-In Centre Client Rights

CHARTER OF CLIENT RIGHTS

Reviewed and Revised November 2013

[redacted] a voluntary sector agency which exists to enable individuals experiencing social isolation, alcohol related problems, homelessness and poverty (or who are otherwise disadvantaged or marginalised) to become more independent and to improve the quality of their lives in their own terms. [redacted] to advocate for people's rights as stated in the Human Rights Act 1998.

- People who access this service have the right to receive fair treatment which takes into consideration their individual needs and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, culture, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other attribute.
- People who access this service have the right to be treated with respect by staff, partnership agencies, volunteers and other clients.
- Clients, staff, partnership agencies and volunteers have the right to a safe environment.
- People who access this service have the right to enjoy clean, hygienic surroundings.
- People who access this service have the right to an explanation as to why information is recorded and about the confidentiality policy
- People who access this service have the right to request to see files and records held about them in accordance with policy and procedures.
- People who access this service will not be referred to in terms which are derogatory and considered inappropriate.
- People who access this service will not be the subject of any research or have any information or photographs taken without their signed consent.
- People who access this service have the right to be represented, informed and consulted on issues which directly affect them.
- People who access this service have the right to complain using [redacted] complaints procedure.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis

6. Drop-In Centre Client Involvement Policy

[redacted]

CLIENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Reviewed and revised November 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definitions

Client: Throughout this document, the term client is used to refer to current or former clients of [redacted] services.

Involvement: This term refers to the active participation of clients in the planning, delivery and development o[redacted] s services. The aims of client involvement are to consult clients and develop partnerships so that their needs, views and suggestions can inform decision-making about services.

1.2 Aims/Scope of the Policy

We are committed to ensuring that clients are involved in a real and meaningful way in decision making which influences [redacted] services. We recognise and value the experience and expertise clients can bring and through this policy, and other work, seek to strengthen that contribution.

Our policy also sits in a wider national context with strategies such as the NHS Plan (2000) setting out the Government's vision for client-centred service delivery. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to clients, [redacted] staff and the Board of Trustees.

The policy has been developed and agreed with clients, members of staff, and [redacted] Board members. It applies to all services provided by [redacted] and should be implemented in a way which best meets the needs of our diverse client groups.

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure that there is a consistent approach to client involvement across [redacted] services
- enable clients to have a key role in this process
- promote client involvement as an ongoing and integrated component of organisational activity

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2. GUIDELINES FOR CLIENT INVOLVEMENT

2.1 Methods of Consultation

Client involvement is likely to benefit from the use of a combination of methods to secure the involvement of a wide constituency of clients at as many different organisational levels as possible.

The following are some suggested methods of consultation:

- **Clients invited to attend meeting / events.**
  This is the most common form of consultation and much of the following guidance covers this type of involvement. It includes: open consultation events, round table meetings, interviews, training, service-specific consultations, day to day conversations and focus groups. These could take place at our General, Eastern European or Women only service user forums.

- **Clients hold consultation meetings to consider an issue and feed back these views to [redacted].**
  [redacted] will facilitate and support as appropriate events which are intended to develop and improve services.

- **Feedback from partner agencies.**
  [redacted] is both open and happy to receive feedback from other agencies and encourages this.

2.2 Guidance for Client Involvement

The following guidelines were developed and agreed by clients, staff and external partnership agencies and are intended as standards to aim for in involving clients. Each case of involvement is different and a flexible approach responsive to the needs expressed by clients is recommended:

- Consider the best method of consultation first (see above)
- For round table meetings, interviews and training, clients should be contacted and briefed prior to the event.
- In the case of service-specific events, clients can be contacted directly. Open events should be publicised widely.
- Give adequate notice of meeting/consultation (ideally 2 - 4 weeks). Consult as early on in the process as possible.
- Notice-board to be regularly updated with news, correspondence and client forum/committee agenda and outcomes.
- Invite a minimum of two clients to meetings for mutual support.
- Provide necessary documents/information (minutes, agendas, term of reference) in an accessible, user-friendly format in advance of the meeting.
- The training and support needs of staff and clients should be considered and addressed to ensure involvement is effective and beneficial.

- A 'buddy-system' should be used in involving and welcoming new clients as part of the Ambassador scheme.
- Staff should make the purpose of meetings clear and ensure meetings are client-friendly, avoiding jargon, to encourage full participation from clients. The person chairing the meeting should be responsible for ensuring that this happens.
- A system for proving regular full and timely feedback to clients on outcomes of involvement must be established at the outset.
- Activities should be used to develop and maintain client involvement
- Incentives for clients involvement should be standardised (if applicable).

2.3 Training and Development

It is recommended that all clients involved in service development, for example; sitting on staff interview panels, receive the following training or briefing as required:

- Introduction to client involvement, including:
  - what it involves
  - what is expected of the client
  - benefits to the client
- Participating in meetings, including:
  - format and protocol of round table meetings
  - Chairing
- Influencing/negotiation skills, including:
  - assertiveness/confidence building
  - effective communication
  - negotiating with service managers
- Interviewing skills, including:
  - equal opportunities
- NEED GROUND RULES FOR MEETINGS

2.4 Support

[redacted] when requesting involvement should ensure that support is available to the clients to engage in client involvement activities. Support can come from another client or a staff mentor.

3. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

RELATED POLICIES:
Complaints Procedures.

7. Data Analysis Mind Map Example